

## **Hitler's Third Reich – Issue 6**

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# HITLER'S

## Third Reich

Volume  
**6**

Monthly

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Hitler, the Warlord

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# HITLER'S Third Reich

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# Hitler, the Warlord

**Adolf Hitler's military experience was limited to the trenches of World War I. But when he came to power in Germany in 1933, he oversaw the building of a formidable military machine.**

**W**artime enemies, post-war pundits and many of his own generals have poured scorn on the Führer's military leadership. Winston Churchill called him 'corporal Hitler'; Field Marshal von Rundstedt dismissed him as 'the Bohemian corporal'. So grew the legend that the professional skill of the German army had been wasted by the incompetence of a former NCO. For the defeated German generals in 1945 this was the perfect alibi: it salvaged their professional reputation and bolstered their defence at Nuremberg.

Hitler was acutely conscious of the humble rank he had held during the First World War. And proud: he was a *Frontkämpfer* whose political career flowed from his ability to articulate the hopes and

*Adolf Hitler describes his Eastern Front strategy to Marshal Antonescu of Rumania. In spite of his lack of formal military training, the Führer's will dominated German strategy for most of the war.*





## SECRET HITLER FILES



*Above: Hitler celebrates at Compiègne after the defeat of France. It was his support of the 'unorthodox strike through the Ardennes' which ensured victory.*

*Right: Hitler forced the attack plan devised by von Manstein through the doubts of the General Staff, who had planned a much more conventional campaign.*



fears of a generation that lost its youth in the mud and blood of Flanders. In Britain, the casualty lists of 1914-18 tarnished the high command so deeply that, in the popular mind today, Haig and his generals are the epitome of military incompetence. In Germany, the bitterness ran equally deeply, but with the savage difference that the war was lost.

In 1933 Hitler inherited a small, but highly professional army. He oversaw its rapid expansion and became an early convert to the cause of mechanisation. He had an elephantine memory for technical detail, a fascination with technology that helped the advocates of armoured forces overcome conservative elements within the army. By the late 1930s Germany had an armoured

striking force second to none and an airforce equipped with the best warplanes in the world. If the modernisation was uneven, and in fact superficial, it did not seem to matter in 1939-40. Hitler's war machine swept everything before it, and the Führer justly claimed the credit for his triumph.

### HITLER TRIUMPHANT

From the invasion of Poland to late 1941, the Germany forces enjoyed an unbroken run of victories. Norway was occupied despite British naval superiority: a bold stroke demanded by the Führer regardless of his generals' anxieties. The army high command planned to invade France exactly as its 'God of Planning', Count von Schlieffen had laid

down at the beginning of the century – the plan that had failed in 1914. The main effort would have been made through Belgium: a decision anticipated by the French and British. But by the time the BEF was on the Brussels road, the German strategy had changed. It was an audacious stroke planned by von Manstein, seized upon by Hitler, and forced on a reluctant high command.

Germany's armoured forces poured through the supposedly impenetrable Ardennes forest, bursting through the French 9th army to cross the Meuse and fatally rupture the Allied front. The one-time corporal had overruled his generals and won

*Hitler takes the salute at an army parade soon after coming to power. He is flanked by the heads of the Army, the Navy and the newly-appointed head of the Luftwaffe – Hermann Goering.*





# Hitler's Military Experience

## Shaped in the Flanders trenches

**H**itler's personal military experience profoundly influenced his relations with the armed forces of the Third Reich. Confronted by the haughty aristocrats of the General Staff he could fall back on his own experience of front-line conditions: hard-won knowledge that — in his mind — set him apart from staff officers who worked in comfort behind the lines. Hitler had endured four ghastly years in Flanders, fighting a defensive battle against the Allies, primarily the British, whose technological and material superiority continually increased.

The Great War was also a conflict divorced from political rationale. Pre-war German war aims swelled to preposterous

dimensions to justify the casualties, carving an unbridgeable gap between German objectives and German capabilities. The outright annexation of Belgium and large swathes of eastern Europe were regarded as the minimum Germany could accept.

Peace proposals supported by the Reichstag in 1917 were quashed in favour of an all-or-nothing offensive in 1918. The 'Kaiser's battle' cost Germany another million casualties, and was followed by an overwhelming Allied attack that shattered the German army. Hitler blamed the politicians, together with 'Jews and Bolsheviks' for the losses, but he also considered the Prussian officer class to be at fault.



Above: The fate of many German soldiers in the last months of the war was to be taken captive by the Allies. Hitler missed the final battles: he was recovering at a hospital in Germany after being gassed at Ypres in October 1918.



Above: In spite of the fact that he was living in a muddy hole in the ground, in danger of his life, and with few real friends, Hitler looked back on the camaraderie of the trenches as one of the happiest times of his life.

Above and right: The horror of World War I was the sheer concentration of death: millions of men perished fighting over a few yards of terrain in France and Flanders. It is not surprising that Hitler looked for ways of avoiding the kind of stalemate he had experienced in the trenches of Flanders, but at the same time he seemed incapable of realising that combat on the Eastern Front or in the desert offered very different conditions.







*Above: Hitler watches the final assault on Warsaw at the conclusion of the war's opening campaign. This was one of the few occasions that the Führer got close enough to the front line to actually see the fighting.*

to the catastrophe at Stalingrad, replicated on a similar scale in North Africa a few months later. From early 1943 the weaknesses in the German war machine became increasingly significant—although they were not always apparent to the Allies. Hitler's armies fought on to the end with diabolical efficiency. Yet their tremendous skill and undoubted bravery was indeed misdirected. Hitler cut himself off from his people, appearing only twice in public after Stalingrad.

Isolated in his sunless concrete bunker deep in the East Prussian forest, Hitler directed his armies through the hapless 'yes men' Jodl and Keitel. His attempts to micro-manage the war tied the hands of his front line commanders, who were forbidden to move even their smallest units without permission. His insistence on clinging to indefensible positions cost Germany thousands of men that could have retaken the lost ground if they had been allowed to fall back, re-group and counter-attack.

Hitler's strategy played into his enemies' hands in 1944, sending German reserves to the wrong sector of the eastern front. German reaction to D-Day was sluggish, local commanders having to wait for the Führer's permission to counter-attack. Worst of all, Hitler regarded the Normandy landings as a feint until it was too late. To crown a disastrous year for Germany, in December Hitler repeated the failed German strategy of 1918 by launching an all-or-nothing assault in the west. The Ardennes offensive squandered Germany's last reserves, hastening the final collapse.

*Below: May 1941, and Hitler confers with Field Marshals Keitel and von Brauchitsch as they plan the invasion of Russia. They are at the 'Wolf's Lair' at Rastenburg in East Prussia, which was the Führer's field headquarters.*

By the time the tank divisions were brought back to the Moscow front it was too late. Stalin had rallied the Soviets, and Zhukov's Siberian reinforcements were in position.

## HITLER THE GAMBLER

In 1942 Hitler gambled again, attacking across the good tank country of southern Russia. His stated objective was the Caucasus oil fields, but the attack failed for the same reasons as the previous year's. The distances were too great, supply problems insurmountable, and operational objectives were switched, leaving the 6th Army to make a frontal attack on Stalingrad. The German army found itself locked in a battle of attrition on the frontier of Asia, exposed to a devastating counter-offensive.

The failure of Hitler's strategy in 1942 led

the most stunning military victory German arms had ever achieved.

This was followed by the lightning conquest of the Balkans, before Hitler turned on Russia. The first few months seemed to conform to the pattern: the Wehrmacht carved its way to Smolensk and on to the Moscow road. There, in November 1941 the invasion faltered. Zhukov's counter-attack in December drove the Germans back and the recriminations began. After the war, several German officers blamed Hitler for changing objectives in Russia: first Moscow was the target, then the Ukraine, then Moscow again.



*Above: Hitler inspects shattered French fortifications on the Rhine soon after the fall of France in June 1940.*





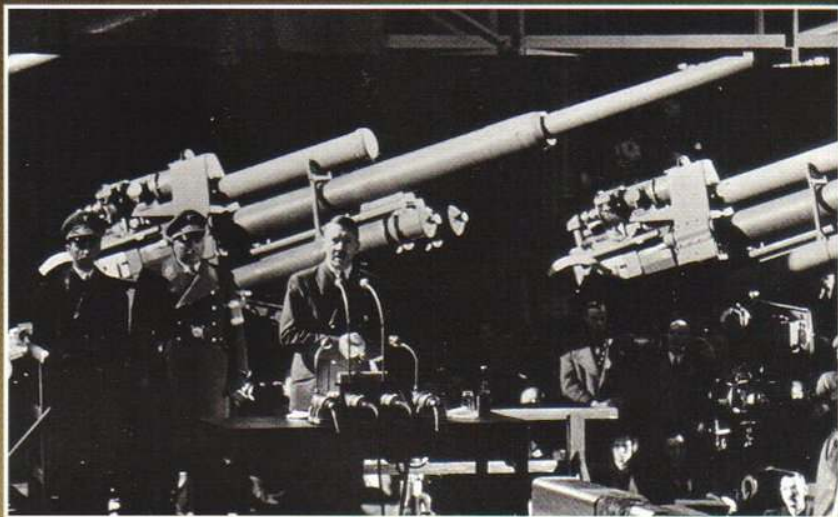
# Hitler's Fatal Flaw

## Lack of direction

Criticism of Hitler's generalship has tended to concentrate on bad military decisions. Yet this overlooks the truly fatal weakness in his leadership: failure to match political objectives with military capabilities. Hitler combined the roles of commander-in-chief and head of government. His goals were way beyond the realms of conventional politics: biblical wars of conquest to enslave whole populations – ambitions not attempted in Europe since the Mongol invasions of the 13th century.

Hitler's objectives were extreme, but he shrank from the extreme measures necessary to attain them. Brought to power in the wake of recession, the Nazi regime strove to improve the lot of the German worker. Pre-war economic policy provided guns and butter. It never addressed the contradiction between Hitler's grotesque, genocidal plans for Poland and Russia and his refusal to take the domestic consequences of a total war economy – in 1940 armaments workers were being laid off as military orders dried up.

Instead, it was the USSR where factory workers worked themselves to death to give the Red Army the weapons it needed, producing more tanks than Germany despite Russia's smaller steel manufacturing capability. The British went to work too: out-producing Germany in tanks, aircraft and warships for much of the war. Hitler's over-reaching ambitions drove his enemies to desperate lengths, which the Germany economy did not begin to match until it was too late.



*Above: Hitler addresses armaments workers at the end of 1940. Germany was slow to gear up for total war, taking its cue from the Führer who could not believe that the British would continue to fight. Many of the people who had made the weapons of the Blitzkrieg were laid off, the Nazis by this time considering that the war was won.*



*Right: Refugees at a soup kitchen in Berlin in 1945. Hitler's miscalculations over the course of the war were to bring Germany to utter ruin.*



*Left: Militarily, the invasion of the USSR was doomed from the start. The German army could not supply itself so deep inside Russia. Enormous distances and poor communications would see the invasion forces grind to a halt after 500 km, whatever the level of Russian resistance.*





# BELSEN

## HELL ON EARTH

**Belsen was not the largest camp, but for a few short months at the end of the war it was one of the worst: conditions even seemed bad to prisoners transferred from Auschwitz!**

**T**O SAY THAT the British soldiers sent to take over the camp in April 1945 were horrified would be one of the biggest understatements ever made. A charnel house designed to house perhaps ten thousand prisoners had been packed with more than 60,000 'political prisoners' in hellishly insanitary conditions, and an epidemic of Typhus raged through the starved inmates. As many as 35,000 had already died in the weeks before the takeover, and





# The Beast of Belsen

At his trial in 1945, the main blame for the horrors of Belsen fell on Josef Kramer, who had become known as 'The Beast of Belsen'. The trial showed that Kramer could easily have alleviated the terrible conditions, but chose not to. In his opening statement, prosecutor Colonel Backhouse said:

"So far as one knows, Belsen was originally a small camp, a transit camp, but at the end of November of last year Josef Kramer was called to Berlin. Kramer, who had been in the concentration camp service throughout the entire Nazi period, had been the commander of a portion of Auschwitz. The head of the concentration camp service told Kramer to go and look at the camp and if he found any difficulties he was to report back."

"He went there, and from 1st December he was the *Kommandant* of the camp and in sole charge. There were no standing orders from Berlin; the administration was left to him, and the Prosecution will ask you to say that he is primarily responsible for everything that happened in that camp. He was assisted by an officer in charge of administration, by a criminal investigation officer, a doctor, a dentist. The rest of his staff, apart from the guard commander who did not come directly under him, were Warrant Officers and NCOs of the SS numbering some 60 to 70."



Above: Josef Kramer and Irma Grese (who was in charge of the Belsen death cells) gained much of their experience in handling prisoners at Auschwitz.

Below: SS *Aufseherinnen* or female overseers were among the most brutal of all the camp guards. Most had been hardened at other camps like Ravensbrueck.



Above: Many of the prisoners who arrived at Belsen from other camps – men, women and children – were already ill. Most died from the typhus epidemic sweeping the camp.

Right: Even the prisoners who survived to see the coming of the Allies were not assured of survival. As many as 10,000 were simply too weak to live.



at least 10,000 more were so ill that they were beyond help.

What made it more disgusting was that they were greeted by a burly, scar-faced Nazi in a new SS uniform. Joseph Kramer, *Kommandant* of Belsen, expressed his desire to collaborate with the British, and offered advice on how to deal with a 'difficult' situation.

At Kramer's trial, later that year, the Vice-Director of Medical Services, Brigadier Hugh Llewelyn Glyn Hughes, testified to what they had found.

"The huts had had water laid

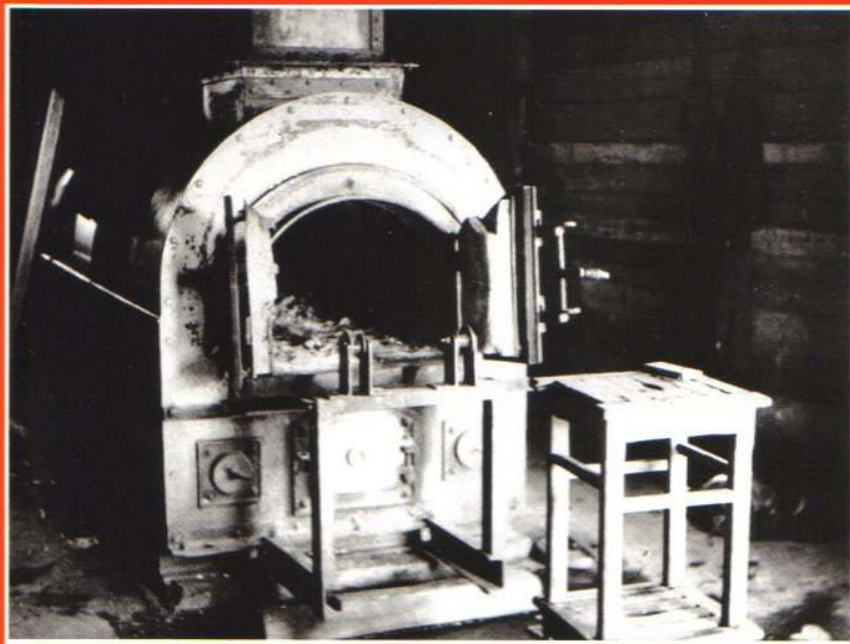


# Holding camp for terminally ill prisoners

**B**elsen, located about 19 kilometres north of Celle, was established in 1942 as a combined holding camp for Soviet POWs and an internment camp for several thousand Jews who were to be held as bargaining chips to exchange for Germans held by the Allies. These were housed in a compound called the Star Camp, since they did not wear camp uniforms and were identified by the Star of David sewn onto their clothing.

Late in 1944 it was converted into a concentration camp, under the command of Josef Kramer, who had served at Natzweiler and Auschwitz. It took on a new role as a hospital camp for sick and injured prisoners from other camps.

As the Allied armies approached from East and West early in 1945, Belsen collected tens of thousands of prisoners evacuated on 'death marches' from camps nearer to the fighting.



*Left: The crematorium at Belsen. The camp lacked the industrial-scale corpse processing plants of the death camps, and when prisoners began dying at Auschwitz-like rates they bodies were simply piled up or left to rot where they had fallen.*

*Above: The caption on this photograph of a young Belsen victim reads simply, "She lived." There was no distinction between children and adults: hundreds of young people were among the tens of thousands who died.*

on but it was not functioning, and in addition there were large concrete ponds in the camp near the cookhouses."

"There were various sizes of piles of corpses lying all over the camp, some outside the wire and some in between the huts, and the frightful scenes inside were much worse... The gutters were full and within the huts there were uncountable numbers of bodies, some even in the same bunks as the living... Some of the huts had bunks but not many, and they were filled absolutely to overflowing with prisoners in every state of emaciation and disease."

## CROWDED IN DEATH

"There was not room for them to lie down at full length in each hut. In the most crowded there were anything from 600 to 1,000

**"Bergen-Belsen was certainly the most wretched. You noticed death much more than at Auschwitz. There, people simply disappeared ... here, you saw them get weaker and die."**

**Rachel van Amerongen  
-Frankfoorder**

people in accommodation which should only have taken 100."

"There was no sanitation. The conditions were indescribable because most of the internees were suffering from some form

of gastro-enteritis and they were too weak to leave the hut. The lavatories in the huts had long been out of use. In the women's compound there was a deep trench with a pole over it but no screening or form of privacy at all. Those who were strong enough could get into the compound: others performed their natural functions from where they were."

"The compounds were absolutely one mass of human excreta. In the huts themselves the floors were covered, and the people in the top bunks who could not get out just poured it on to the bunks below."

"No. 1 Compound was a very large and contained between 22,000 and 23,000 women. The huts were set amongst trees and conditions were frightful, but perhaps not as bad as No. 2

Women's Compound. This, although small, had about 6000 in it. In this compound there was a very large pile of corpses.

"In Hut No. 208, which was close to the pile of corpses, there were dead women lying in the passage, which was so full that no women could lie down straight. The main room on the left of the passage was one mass of bodies and you could not get another into it. The inmates were in a state of extreme emaciation and women were dying frequently."

## MEDICAL SUPPLIES

Brigadier Hughes was asked about the medical supplies available to the inmates.

"There were quite a few large stocks in the store, but the standard issue, I was told by the chief doctor there, was 300





*Right: Very few of Belsen's original population of Soviet prisoners of war survived. Most had been starved or worked to death and had been replaced by 'political' prisoners and Jews.*

*Left: The British troops who liberated Belsen forced the SS camp guards to assist in the relief operation – often at gunpoint. Here one of the women responsible for running the female camp is made to help one of her victims wash.*



*Right: Survivors of the womens' camp boil water for soup soon after the arrival of the British. For more than three months they have been unable to light fires. Now, until proper fuel supplies can be arranged, they are burning the shoes of the thousands of their fellow prisoners who have not survived.*



aspirin tablets for 17,000 sick people for one week. I do not think there were any large quantities of disinfectant available and no anti-louse powder issued. I found a large number of Red Cross boxes sent by Jewish Associations for the Jews. I was told that no issue of the contents had been made except an occasional issue of sweets to the children. The boxes contained meat extracts and food of all kinds, biscuits, milk."

"At the time of entry there was practically no food in the camp – at the most, one meal a day of watery stew made of vegetables. This was distributed in large metal containers which were very heavy. There had been no bread for a fortnight and no water for rather a shorter time, and there appeared to be absolutely no method of ensuring

that each person got their share. When a man or woman got too weak to fetch for themselves and their friends became indifferent through their own condition, then they got none."

## KRAMER'S GUILT

Colonel Backhouse, the prosecuting counsel at Nuremberg, described the food which could have been sent to the prisoners, if the SS guards under Kramer had any desire to.

"It may be that it will be put to you that what was happening

was that transports full of people were coming in from other camps, that they were over-run and that they were to get food owing to the British having smashed up the transport. Kramer says he did everything he could to try to provide food for these poor people, to try and provide water for them and to see to their health and well-being."

"Major Burney arrived on the 15th of April with Colonel Taylor. The next morning he went off to a Wehrmacht camp which was about a mile up the

road and saw the quartermaster. That was where the food for the concentration camp came from.

"Kramer will tell you that the reason he could not get food was because it came from Celle and Hanover, but it in fact came from the Wehrmacht camp. In that camp there was any amount of food which could have been distributed to these poor people. Kramer, of course, says that it was impossible to get bread, but he tried his best. You will hear of a fully stocked bakery in the Wehrmacht Camp with a terrific





**Above: SS women loaded corpses from piles onto lorries and from the lorries onto the mass graves. Few showed any remorse for what they had done.**

grain supply and capable of turning out 60,000 loaves a day which it did immediately afterwards and continued to do so with the same staff and from

the same stock of grain."

"There were vast quantities of medical supplies which have not been exhausted yet. You will hear that in the administration block in No. 1 Camp there were about 100 wooden boxes of tinned milk and meat which were in SS quarters marked 'Hungarian.' They were Red Cross parcels

which had been sent to the Hungarian internees by the Hungarian Red Cross and had been stolen by the SS guards."

## **WATER SUPPLY**

"With regard to the water supply: the camp had been without water for from three to five days and all there was were these foul concrete tanks with bodies in them. But as soon as somebody started to try and do something – with the equipment which was already in that camp and with no addition to it – within two days, there was an adequate working water supply laid on to every kitchen."

"Within five days, with the assistance of only the local fire brigade, there was a complete and proper water system running throughout the camp. So much for the story that this was a breakdown of organisation due to war conditions."

"The simple truth was that there was nothing lacking to

**"One has to see their emaciated faces, their slow staggering gait and feeble movements ... they are dying and nothing can save them. Their end is inescapable. They are too far gone to live."**

**Peter Coombs**  
British officer

provide full water and sanitation in that camp had anybody wanted to do it at all. The SS guards under Kramer deliberately starved those people to death. "

**Below: The scenes at Belsen's mass graves could only have been taken from Dante's 'Inferno' or from a medieval painter's view of hell.**





# DESTROYING THE HELL CAMP

## Controlling Belsen's typhus epidemic

**T**yphus is an extremely virulent, very dangerous fever. It is caused by a micro-organism transmitted by human body lice. Known in the past as prison fever, ship fever, or spotted fever, it thrives among people crowded into filthy and insanitary conditions. Its symptoms include severe headaches, high fever, depression and delirium in addition to the spotted rash which gives it one of its alternative names.

The conditions at Belsen – no running water, no medical care, up to 500 people crowded into a hut designed for perhaps 30 – were ideal for the transmission of the lice which caused typhus, and as many as 30,000 people may have died from the disease in three months. Thousands of bodies lay unburied, adding a further disease hazard to the already weakened inmates.

*Below: A British army chaplain reads the burial service in front of one of the numerous mass graves dug for the victims of Belsen. At the last, as the bodies rotted in the increasing spring temperatures, they were moved into their final resting places by bulldozers.*

Even inmates who had been transferred to Belsen from Auschwitz found conditions severe, and the British army medical teams who were among the first into the camp found it hard to control the epidemic. As many as ten thousand liberated prisoners died because medical treatment came too late.

The normal treatment for infected areas and people was to spray them with DDT, which killed the lice transmitting the disease. However, Belsen was so filthy and disease-ridden that the only answer was to completely destroy the camp, burning down every building and disinfecting every inmate.

The surviving prisoners were moved to a Wehrmacht barracks about 3 kilometres from Belsen, which became a displaced person's camp.



*Above and below: British medical teams used vehicle-mounted flame-throwers to burn down the louse-ridden huts at Belsen. The whole camp was destroyed to prevent the spread of disease.*





NAZI HORRORS



# Collaborators

**Aiding and abetting the enemy**







**C**AMERAS recorded the same incredible scenes in every French town after the breakout from Normandy. As Allied

troops arrived, the people swarmed into the streets in an explosion of joy. But it was not all celebration. It was also time for revenge. The sorriest victims were women: those who had slept with German soldiers were dragged into the streets and beaten. Some were killed, some were raped, most received the public humiliation of having their heads shaved.

One man who collaborated with the Nazis remain infamous to this day. The name of Norwegian politician Vidkun Quisling gave his name to puppet governments, the local figureheads through which Hitler ruled his empire.

For men and women all over Europe, the surrender of their

*Left: A Soviet Kapo or prisoner-of-war camp 'trusty' is assaulted by fellow Russian prisoners for collaborating with the Germans after their liberation in 1945.*

*Above: The fate of all too many French women accused of being too close to the occupying Germans. Some were killed, but most simply had their heads shaved as a mark of shame.*

country posed a terrible dilemma. The Germans did not have the manpower to administer every city let alone every village they conquered. Day-to-day administration remained in local hands. For anyone involved in government, from cabinet ministers to the most junior typist in the town hall, the question was whether to stay in your post and try to cushion your people from the worst, or to give up the job and risk it being taken by a someone more inclined to the Nazis. Every society had its share of crooks, political opportunists and crypto-fascists willing to run the system if the legitimate office-holders abandoned their responsibilities. But if you did stay in office, you had to collaborate to some extent, even if your intentions were good.

The Channel Islands were the only British territories to be occupied by the Germans in

# COLLABORATORS AND THE HOLOCAUST

## European Anti-Semitism in practice

**T**he Vichy authorities collaborated in the Holocaust with an enthusiasm that surprised even the SS. French Jews were rounded up, sent to holding centres in France and then on to the extermination camps: 83,000 men, women and children died. There were another 16,000 victims from the Sinti and Roma (gypsies): 40 per cent of their pre-war population.

The SD had to signal Germany for more transport because the Germans had assumed the French authorities would only hand over adult males, but the Vichy milice (militia) arrested and deported entire families.

The Vichy regime was still broadcasting the most nauseating anti-Semitic propaganda films when the Allies landed in Normandy.



*Left: Deaf and almost senile, Marshal Pétain listens to his accusers at his post-war trial. He had led one of the most anti-Semitic regimes in all of occupied Europe.*

*Right: French police form up behind German troops before setting out on a raid. While many Frenchmen resisted the Germans, at least as many, and probably more, were on the side of the Nazis.*



*Below: French fascists greet new anti-Communist volunteers for the units fighting alongside the SS on the Soviet front.*







World War II. The islands' wartime administrations have recently faced allegations that they collaborated with the Nazis. It is an easy charge to make from the safety of a newspaper office today. From the cop on the beat to the leading men of the Estates, all islanders faced the threat of deportation or worse. Most men were indeed shipped to a prison camp in Germany for the rest of the war. So the authorities could not win: if they failed to comply with German orders, they would

be removed from their posts at the very least. If they followed German orders, they could be accused of collaboration.

## OCCUPIED FRANCE

Only a few miles across the water, in occupied France, the situation was far worse. To a small, but significant proportion of Frenchmen, Hitler was less of a menace than the Communists. And the hideous resurgence of anti-Semitism in western Europe that led to Auschwitz began, not

in Germany, but in France during the latter half of the nineteenth century.

The French Third Republic was born in 1870 to the sound of guns around the old fortress town of Sedan, where Emperor Napoleon III was defeated and captured by the Germans. It fell again in 1940 as Hitler's panzer divisions won a second battle at Sedan, crossing the Meuse and outflanking the Maginot Line. France's most famous soldier, Marshal Henri Philippe Pétain

**"You may not hear from me again again for a few months. I say es lebe Deutschland! Heil Hitler! ... and farewell"**

**Lord Haw Haw (William Joyce)  
Signing off his last broadcast  
30th April 1945**

stepped into the breach.

The regime he established at Vichy seemed to collaborate so wholeheartedly with the Nazis that Hitler had genuine hopes that France would join Germany in formal alliance. However, although Pétain formed a government of right-wing cranks and rabid anti-Semites, it was not fascist, and he managed to avoid entangling France with a German alliance. Then, too, it was only a minority of the population who were active collaborators: the majority just went on with their lives, while a small number joined the resistance. The government was led by Admiral Jean-François Darlan until April 1942, when Hitler insisted Pétain release former deputy head of state Pierre Laval, jailed for intriguing against Pétain at the end of 1940.

## FORCED LABOUR

As premier, Laval orchestrated the mass deportation of French men and women to work in German factories. These forced labourers worked in better conditions than the slaves taken from eastern Europe, but that is not saying much. The Germans kept raising the quotas until the universal conscription of French males was being prepared in the summer of 1944: only the D-Day landings forestalled it.

Holland had an active collaborationist regime led by Anton Mussert. He was arrested in May 1945 and later hanged. Many other collaborators met the same fate. Léon Degrelle flew to Spain, crash-landing just inside the border. He was allowed to stay, but Pierre Laval, who had also sought sanctuary with Franco, was expelled. Arrested in

*Above: A Dutch Jewess prepares to board the train for Auschwitz. Dutch civil authorities and police co-operated with the SS in rounding up the Jews, though most ordinary citizens did not approve.*

*Above left: The Chetniks fought alongside Germans in the brutal partisan war in Yugoslavia. They did not necessarily agree with the Nazis (though some did) – it was enough that the opposing partisans were Communist.*

*Left: The press in most occupied countries collaborated. They had to: reporters critical of the German-approved government or the Nazis risked a term in a concentration camp.*





Austria, he was taken back to France and executed for treason. Pétain was sentenced to death, commuted to life imprisonment. He died in jail in 1951. Some escaped to South America: Ante Pavelic, the Croatian fascist leader, joined the secret police in Paraguay. Latvian fascist leader Herbert Cukors joined him there but was lured to Montevideo and assassinated by the Jewish revenge group DIN.

The SS drew in upwards of 200,000 volunteers from every country in Europe except Poland. Fifty-eight of them were British. The *Britische Freikorps* was the brainchild of John Amery, the son of the former First Lord of the Admiralty Leo Amery. A café fascist in the 1930s, sometime follower of British Fascist leader Oswald Mosley, he served with the Italian forces in the Spanish Civil War and was living in France in 1940.

## BRITISH SS MEN

German indifference and the desperately low character of the volunteers prevented the 'Legion of St George' ever amounting to much. By the time it was formally organised, the war was lost anyway.

Amery had committed treason and was hanged. If his life was a disaster, he at least went out with some sang froid, greeting the celebrated British hangman, 'Mr Pierrepont, I have always wanted to meet you, though not, of course, in these circumstances'.

William Joyce, 'Lord Haw Haw,' was the most notorious 'British' collaborator. He did not escape either. He had crowed over the London Blitz and maintained a sneering diatribe against Britain right up to 1945. He was a US citizen who had taken German citizenship during the war, but had used a fraudulently obtained British passport to leave the country before the war. The prosecution argued he was therefore British and a traitor, and the jury took just twenty minutes to agree. He was hanged in January 1946.

# TRAITORS

## Fighting alongside the Germans

The Nazis posed as the defenders of European civilisation against Stalin's evil empire. Many countries in Europe had brief, unpleasant experiences of Communist rule, from short-lived republics in the wake of World War I to more entrenched, if avowedly socialist regimes like the French Popular Front in the mid-1930s.

A regiment of French volunteers joined the German army in 1941 and was transferred to the SS in August 1943. By 1945 it had expanded to the Waffen-SS Division 'Charlemagne'. In Belgium the Rexist party pledged its support for Germany, its leader Léon Degrelle commanding a volunteer regiment in the German army, also transferred to the SS in 1943. As the SS volunteer division 'Wallonien', it fought with great determination on the Russian front. In Russia the Cossacks fought on both sides, providing enough men for an SS cavalry division. And despite Hitler's opposition, several hundred thousand former Soviet soldiers were recruited into an anti-Communist Russian army led by renegade general Andrei Vlasov.

*Right: the Belgian Rexist Léon Degrelle, who became a much-decorated Waffen-SS officer.*



*Above: John Amery, the son of the First Lord of the Admiralty, led the SS 'Legion of Saint George'. With only 58 volunteers it was not a success, despite which Amery was hanged for treason.*

*Right: Holland's collaborators were led by Anton Mussert, head of the Dutch Nationaal-Socialistisch Beweging, who was appointed Reichs Commissioner for the Netherlands in 1942.*



*Left: Irish-American William Joyce, seen here at a pre-war fascist meeting in London, began broadcasting for the Germans. He was known as Lord Haw-Haw.*

*Above: Vidkun Quisling (centre) led the fascist Nasjonal Samling party in Norway. He was rewarded for his treachery by being made head of the puppet government set up by the Germans.*



# Albert Speer

## ARCHITECT OF WAR

**Albert Speer was a young architect who in five years rose to become one of the most important and influential men in the Third Reich.**

**T**HE MONUMENTAL public buildings of the Third Reich, largely the product of Hitler's frustrated ambitions as an architect, owe at least part of their origin to one of the youngest and most capable members of the Nazi inner circle.

Hitler was fascinated by models and plans for Berlin, and in 1937 he appointed Speer General Architectural Inspector of the Reich with instructions to "turn Berlin into a real and true capital of the German Reich". Though some architects thought that the designs inspired by Hitler were 'insane sentimentality' and more in character with the late 19th century than the early 20th, Speer worked hard to make them a reality.

### **FAST TRACK TO POWER**

Speer rose in the Nazi hierarchy and was elected to the Reichstag in 1941, though he continued to work on architectural projects up to 1942. That year, following the death of Dr Fritz Todt in an air crash – which may have been engineered by the Nazi inner circle – he was appointed Minister of Armaments and War Production. He changed from master architect to dedicated technocrat.

Speer worked miracles in converting the German economy to total war, stepping up production even in the face of devastating allied bombing. But

*Architecture was Adolf Hitler's private passion, and architects were among his favourite companions. It was Albert Speer to whom Hitler entrusted his dream of re-building Germany in his own grandiose style.*





by now the war was lost.

In March 1945 Hitler issued the 'Nero Decree', ordering a scorched earth policy in the face of advancing Allied armies. If he was to fall, then as a funeral pyre he was determined to bring Germany down to destruction as well. The Führer gave orders for the destruction of docks, coal mines, industrial plants and all road and rail bridges in the Reich. Hitler's explanation for the order was that the German people had failed him, and that the decree reflected his disappointment at their inability to live up to his genius. Keenly aware that these were vital resources for the survival of a defeated Germany, Speer made every effort to ensure that the orders were not carried out.

When he was brought before the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg in 1946, Speer was the only senior Nazi to admit his guilt for the crimes of the Third Reich. Speer asserted that his work was 'technological and economic'. He repudiated

*Below: Speer's innovative use of searchlights at a Party Rally in Berlin led to his being commissioned to design the massive Nuremberg rally ground.*

## Hitler's Architect

### Builder of the new Germany

**A**lbert Speer was born in Mannheim on March 15, 1905. After studying architecture he became an assistant at the Berlin Technical College. In 1931 he joined the Nazi party - party number 474,481. In 1932 he became a member of the SS.

It was when he undertook to redesign the office of a Berlin Gauleiter that his talents attracted the attention of more senior members of the party. He was made responsible for technical arrangements at the rally at Tempelhof Field in May 1933. It was a great success, the combination of searchlights and banners being powerfully effective, and a year later he was commissioned to design the party rally stadium at Nuremberg.

Few of the plans Albert Speer produced for his master were ever built, and fewer of those still survive. However, the stadium built for the XI Olympiad in 1936 still remains, and in the former West Berlin the city's lakes retain the wooded or grassed foreshores which had been part of Speer's city plan.

Speer designed the German hall at the Paris Exhibition of 1937 and drew up grandiose designs for the Reich Chancellery in Berlin and the Party Palace in Nuremberg. In 1938 Hitler conferred on him the *Goldenes Parteiabzeichen* (the Golden Party Badge).

*Right: Albert Speer, in his capacity as Generalbauinspektor für die Reichshauptstadt, shows Nazi Interior Minister Wilhelm Frick plans and models of Berlin's planned new Südbahnhofs or Southern rail station.*







**Above:** Hitler and Speer inspect the incomplete Haus der Deutschen Kunst in Munich. Hitler liked seeing his projects in the building stage, and he usually took Speer with him.

**Top right:** In Speer's hands German industry built over 1,000 U-Boats for Admiral Doenitz – Speer's armaments programme won him the favour of senior military commanders.

**Right:** Speer married Margarethe Weber after qualifying as an architect in 1927. They had six children, who were all sent to safety before the fall of Berlin in 1945.



violence not on humanitarian grounds but on the practical point that it hindered his efforts to increase production. Limiting its judgement entirely to Speer's use of slave labour in the construction and armaments programme the Tribunal found him guilty on Count 3 (War Crimes), and Count 4 (Crimes against Humanity). In mitigation it recognised that "in the closing stages of the war he was one of the few men who had the courage to tell Hitler that the war was lost and to take steps to prevent the senseless destruction of production facilities".

## WAR CRIMINAL

On October 1, 1946 Albert Speer was sentenced to twenty years' imprisonment in Berlin's Spandau Prison. In 1954 he set himself an exercise routine in prison in which he 'walked

**"I was looking for an architect to whom I could entrust my building plans. I wanted someone young, as these plans extend far into the future. I needed someone who will be able to continue after my death with the authority I have conferred on him. I saw you as that man"**

**Hitler, in a letter to Albert Speer.**

around the world' with the objective of covering 40,000 kilometres, visualising the cities and geography of the countries he visited in his mind. He was assisted in this project by maps

and descriptions of the world sent to him by his friend, the architect Rudolf Wolters. At the time of his release Speer had covered nearly 32,000 kilometres.

## SPEER THE WRITER

The greater challenge was writing *Erinnerungen* – Reminiscences. Written secretly and smuggled out of Spandau page by page, it caused a sensation when first published in 1970. Appearing in English as 'Inside the Third Reich', it was the only view of the inner circles of Nazi power written by one of the participants. It was especially scathing about Goebbels, Goering and Himmler, who ran individual fiefdoms often at the expense of the war effort.

Speer was released in 1966. At liberty he wrote 'Spandau: The Secret Diaries' and

contributed to television broadcasts about World War II. He asserted that he had no part in the horrors that his work made possible, though he said that he had made a pact with the devil and realised far too late the implications of his agreement.

Albert Speer died in September 1981 during a visit to London to take part in a BBC TV programme on the Third Reich. In 1995 author Gitta Sereny published 'Albert Speer: his Battle with Truth', based on interviews with Speer conducted just before his death, as well as with his wartime friends and colleagues. It is a penetrating insight into the mind of man who had deceived even himself. By the end of the book, she had forced him to admit that, though he had denied it at Nuremberg, he knew about the Final Solution and tacitly consented to it.

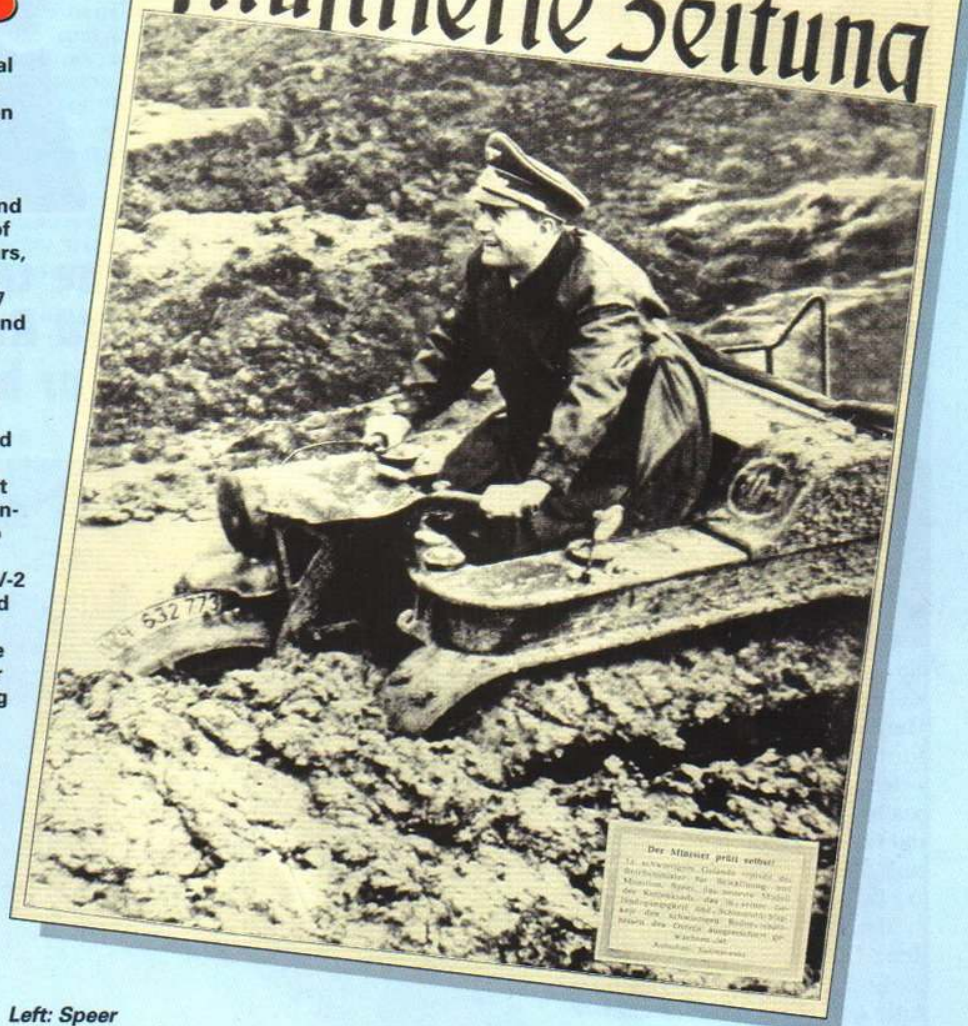


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**Left: Speer addresses workers at an armaments factory. One of his greatest achievements was to make best use of the German labour force, which until 1942 had been used far less efficiently than in Russia or Britain.**

**Above: Speer was one of the most visible of all the Nazi leaders, both in his visits to factories and military units, and in the German press. Here he tries out a new half-track motor-cycle.**



**Left:** Speer liked getting information on weapons direct from the people who used them. Here, he watches tanks in training during a visit to a Panzer Corps HQ on the Eastern Front.

**Above: Speer talks with Generalmajor Adolf Galland, the fighter ace tasked with the defence of the Reich against Allied bombers. German fighter production reached its peak in 1944.**







# NAZI ART

**One of the first things Hitler did when he came to power was to ensure that any art produced in the Third Reich conformed to his own very decided notions of what was good or bad.**

**H**ITLER MAY have failed to enter the Vienna Academy of Fine Arts before World War I, but this did not prevent him from shaping

the style of painting and sculpture during the years of the Third Reich. As a self-taught artist working in pen and ink and watercolours Hitler took his paint box to the front in World War I and sketched ruined churches and buildings. But he did not appear to have had a talent for figures.

The post-war Weimar Republic was a time of considerable artistic innovation. Artists, many of whom used art to exorcise their horrific experiences in the trenches, explored new styles and media. French and British artists saw Germany of the 1920s, not as a defeated country, but one liberated from bourgeois conventions and free to experiment with new creative ideas. Hitler, however, did not share their enthusiasm. The modern art revolution was, according to the Führer, the work of the Jews.

"With the help of phoney art critics," he wrote, "and with one Jew bidding against another, they finally suggested to the people – who naturally believe everything that's printed – a conception of

*Right: 'The Flagbearer' was one of the most famous examples of Nazi art. Painted by Hubert Lanzinger, it depicted Hitler as an idealised Teutonic Knight, protecting the Germanic peoples against the alien hordes.*





art according to which the worst rubbish in painting became the expression of the height of artistic accomplishment. The elite, despite their intellectual pretensions, let themselves be swindled – our Minister of Religious Affairs, who knows as much about art as a hippopotamus, fell into the trap and gave official awards to actual shit!”

## NAZI RULES

Things changed after Hitler came to power. On May 10, 1933 students and SA men had invaded public and private libraries and collected books by Jewish, Marxist or left wing writers and burned them publicly. Outside the University of Berlin Nazi students burned the works of Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud, Thomas Mann, Maxim Gorky, Henri Barbusse, Lion Feuchtwanger, Walther Rathenau, Heinrich Heine and many others. Now it would be the turn of artists.

In September 1933 the *Reichskulturkammer* or Reich Chamber of Culture was established. Under the direction of Dr Goebbels, the Minister for Public Enlightenment and Propaganda, it had seven sub-chambers – fine arts, music, theatre, literature, press, radio and films. They were to implement a policy of *Gleichschaltung* or ‘Coordination’ – which was a euphemism for censorship. To become ‘state-approved,’ some 42,000 artists were required to join the Reich Chamber of Visual Arts. This organisation issued directives which had the power of law.

## CONTROLLING ARTISTS

The Reich Chamber of Visual Arts could increase pressure on artists through a series of bans. The first was *Lehrverbot* – a teaching ban, followed by an *Ausstellungsverbot* or exhibition ban, and finally *Malverbot* or a total painting ban. To ensure that artists conformed the Gestapo would make surprise visits to

# DEGENERATE ART

Under the restrictions imposed by the Reich Chamber of Visual Arts, which banned so-called ‘degenerate art’, many of the men who been exploring new territory in the Weimar years left the country. These included a number who had become famous all over the world, and who were to go down in history as 20th century masters.

Paul Klee returned to his native Switzerland, Wassily Kandinsky went to Paris and took French nationality, Oskar Kokoschka, a veteran of World War I, went to England and became a British national and the caricaturist George Grosz departed for the United States. Max

Beckman settled in Amsterdam and survived the war.

Some older artists remained in Germany, including the impressionist Max Liebermann, past-president of the Prussian Academy of Art who was forced to resign in 1933. Commenting on the Nazi-enforced conformity he remarked “I cannot eat as much as I would like to vomit”.

*Below: Wassily Kandinsky's 'Landscape' painted in 1911 is typical of the modern paintings condemned as infantile daubings by the Nazis. Kandinsky had thrived in the Weimar era, but he fled to Paris after Hitler came to power.*



Left: Germanic myth was an important subject to Nazi artists. This tapestry, commissioned for Hermann Goering, was part of a triptych depicting in idealised form the chieftain Arminius who had defeated the Roman legions of Augustus in the first century AD.

Right: As is often the case with dictatorships, some of the most striking and effective images of the Third Reich were those used by graphic artists in propaganda material. This poster of square-jawed SA men celebrates the 1935 Nuremberg Rally.







Above: 'The foal's exercise' by Julius Paul Junghanns (1876-1958) is typical of the bucolic scenes in which this artist specialised. Such romanticised pictures of farming life were extremely popular in Nazi Germany.

Below: One of the many nudes painted by Adolf Ziegler. His painstakingly-executed depictions of the female form earned Ziegler the nickname 'Reich Master of Pubic Hair'.



studios, even going as far as checking if paint brushes were wet. They would also inform owners of shops selling artist's materials which artists were proscribed and therefore forbidden to buy paper, canvas, brushes and paints.

In a move to educate people's tastes the Nazi Government held exhibitions of modern painting

and sculpture which they described as 'Degenerate Art' or *Entarte Kunst*. The first, called 'Government Art, 1918-1933' was held at Karlsruhe within months of Hitler taking power.

In the spring of 1936 Hitler established a tribunal of four Nazi approved artists who were tasked with purging over 100 galleries in the Reich of decadent art. Headed by Professor Adolf

## MONUMENTAL To the Glory of the Reich

The sculptors in the Third Reich were kept busy. Busts of party leaders were the responsibility of the more respected artists, while less well-known figures were kept busy producing the numerous eagles that loomed over the entrance of barracks, public buildings and even air raid shelters.

The sculptor Arno Breker, who had been a member of

the Bauhaus, would later become a favoured member of Hitler's inner circle. Breker's massive bronze statues of naked warriors stood outside the Reich Chancellery in Berlin. His reputation was only rivalled by Professor Joseph Thorak.

Below: Arno Breker works on a bust of one of Hitler's heroes: the composer Richard Wagner.





## INSIDE THE THIRD REICH



Ziegler, President of the Reich Chamber of Visual Arts, its other members were caricaturist Hans-Herbert Schweitzer-Mjöltnir, Count von Baudissen and Wolf Willrich. Von Baudissen succinctly summarised his aesthetic standards: "The most perfect shape, the subtlest image that has recently been created in Germany, has not come from any artist's studio – it is the steel helmet".

### BANNED ART

The jury removed 12,890 paintings, drawings, sketches and sculptures by 112 German artists including Paul Klee, Emil Nolde, Max Beckmann and Oskar Kokoschka, and by non-German artists including Feininger, Picasso, Gauguin, Matisse, Cezanne, Dufy, di Chirico and Van Gogh. Some 700 works were sold in Lucerne – the foreign currency raised in the sale was used to buy armaments. Of the

German artists 500 works by Beckmann, 400 by Kokoschka and 200 by Grosz were confiscated. Nolde, a crusty recluse living in a fisherman's cottage in Schleswig-Holstein, was in fact a Nazi Party member and his work hung on the walls of Dr Goebbels's home, but this did not save him from having 1,000 examples of his work confiscated.

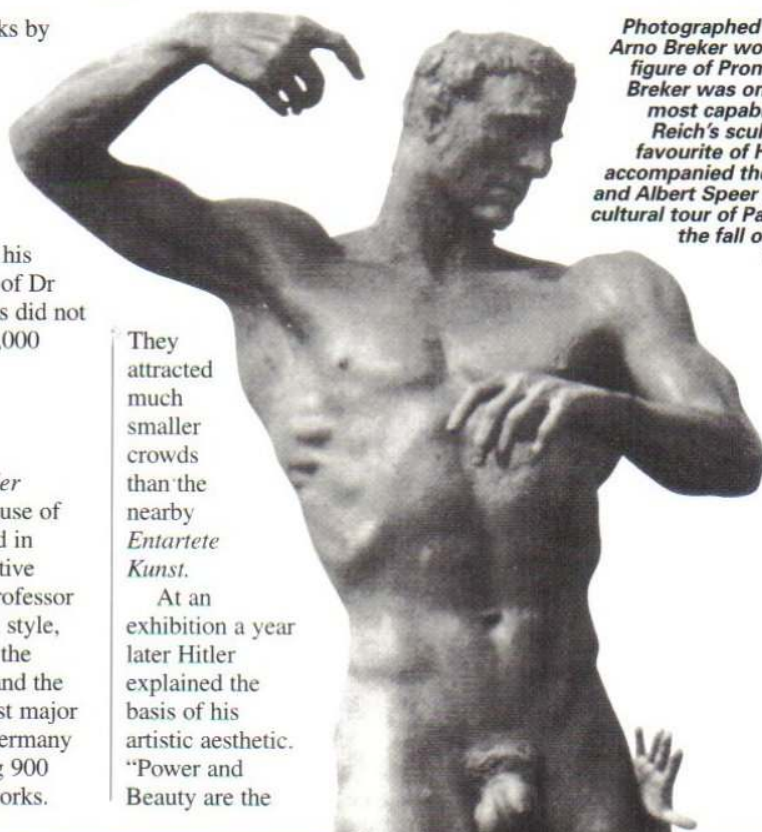
### 'GERMAN' ART

In July 1937 the *Haus der Deutschen Kunst* or 'House of German Art' was opened in Munich. The unimaginative building, designed by Professor Troost in a neo-classical style, inspired nicknames like the 'Munich Art Terminal' and the 'Palazzo Kitschi'. Its first major show was the Greater Germany Art Exhibition, featuring 900 government-approved works.

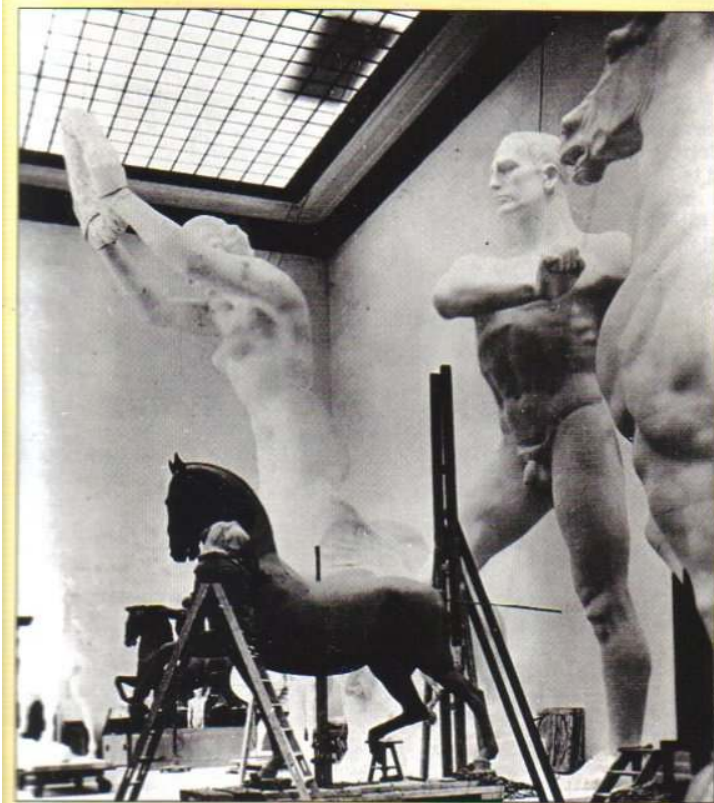
They attracted much smaller crowds than the nearby *Entartete Kunst*.

At an exhibition a year later Hitler explained the basis of his artistic aesthetic. "Power and Beauty are the

Photographed in 1938, Arno Breker works on a figure of Prometheus. Breker was one of the most capable of the Reich's sculptors. A favourite of Hitler, he accompanied the Führer and Albert Speer on their cultural tour of Paris after the fall of France in 1940.



## SCULPTURE



Left: Joseph Thorak works on a monumental horse in his studio. Thorak specialised in very large sculptures, which would have adorned the cities Hitler planned to rebuild after the war.





# INSIDE THE THIRD REICH



Left: A model of the planned German Stadium on display at Nuremberg in 1937. The stadium would have seated a quarter of a million people attending Party days in the city.

Above: The Haus der Deutschen Kunst in Munich was built under the keenly interested eye of the Führer. Its main function was to display what the Nazis considered to be the best of German art.

calls of today. Clarity and Logic dominate our cultural struggle. Artists of this age must identify themselves with the age".

In essence artists were not to occupy themselves with their own personal concerns nor experiment with the medium. Nazi art was to be clear, direct and heroic and express a positive view of German society. There should be no place for pessimism or complexity.

As a role model for artists Goebbels favoured the work of Hermann Otto Heyer. One of his paintings depicting Hitler addressing his first NSDAP meeting was shown at the Greater Germany Art Exhibition. Ironically, it is very similar to contemporary Soviet paintings showing Lenin addressing Communist Party meetings.

As the war progressed the confiscation of Jewish property

and the access to the galleries and libraries of countries overrun by German forces gave the Nazi art experts the opportunity to do a little official looting.

The *Einsatzstab Rosenberg* (Rosenberg Task Force) was set up under the direction of the Nazi ideologue and former architectural student Alfred Rosenberg. Rosenberg had earlier headed an organisation called the 'Combat League of

German Culture' which had attempted to root out modern art in Germany. His new task force undertook the confiscation of art from France and other occupied countries. Between 1940 and 1944 Rosenberg's men took 21,903 art objects of all kinds, including paintings by Rubens, Rembrandt, Goya and Fragonard. The paintings removed from the Louvre in Paris alone were valued at £2 billion.

## COMBAT ART

### Front Line Artists



The outbreak of war in 1939 obliged German artists to harness their skills to furthering the national good. Those who were seconded to the services were given officer rank and worked either for the SBK (Staff of Pictorial Artists, German High Command) or the PKs (Propaganda Companies of the Luftwaffe or the Navy). Their work was now *Kunst der Front* – Front-line Art.

That work ranged from the precise lithographs of Josef Arens which had an almost photographic detail, to the near-expressionist oil on paper of Karl Busch. Men like Hans Arlart and Willfried Nagel sold the propaganda message of the Soviet sub-human in cartoon style.

Recipients of the Knight's Cross might be photographed, or painted. These paintings were in turn made into postcards and sold through the Reich to raise morale.

Left: Many of the paintings by war artists found their way into colour propaganda magazines like *Signal*, published in several languages. This example is from late in the war, and shows that women could also play their part in the war effort.



Above: A Heinkel He 111 returning from bombing England was struck by lightning, which gave the artist Hans Liska the subject for this painting.





*Above: Photographed with one of his children in his garden in 1941, Adolf Ziegler, head of the Reich Chamber of Painters, works on a portrait of Hitler.*

In 1945 the US Army discovered some of the loot stored in a salt mine south of Gotha. Most of these works have been returned to their original owners. However some remain unaccounted for, and controversy still surrounds work which

*Right: Naturally, Adolf Hitler was one of the most popular subjects for painters in the Third Reich, and prints of such paintings adorned almost every home.*

belonged to Jews who were exterminated in the Holocaust.

Hitler's post-war plan was to turn his stuffy provincial home town of Linz in Austria into a cultural centre which would house the finest examples of European art. Headed by the art



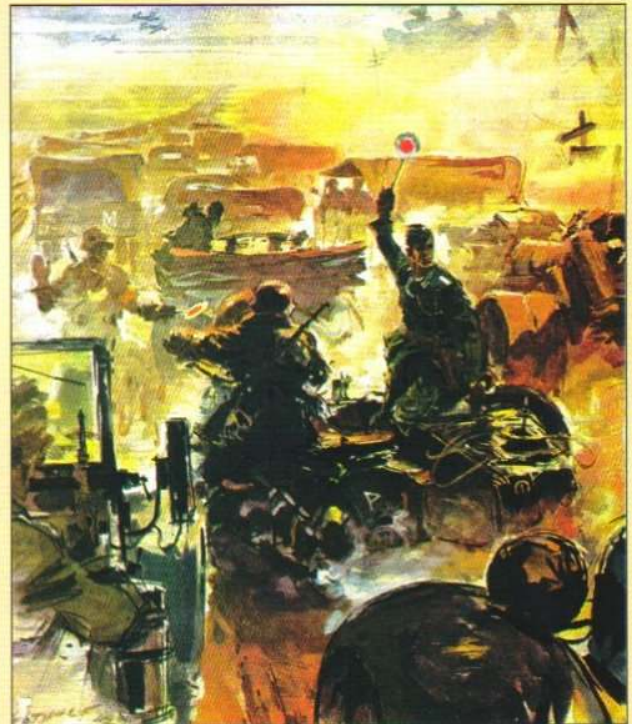
expert Hans Posse, the 'Special Commission Linz' was set up to collect them. The huge art gallery was to be designed by Speer and the town rebuilt to

designs by Giesler. It was here that, like a successful art thief, Hitler planned to retire surrounded by 22,000 examples of looted art.



*Left: Seascapes always offer dramatic possibilities: this shows a night attack by S-Boats on a British convoy in the English Channel.*

*Below: The crew of a damaged Sturmgeschütz assault gun work desperately to repair a broken track while one of their crewmates gives covering fire with an MG 34. This kind of graphic illustration was often used to accompany stories of heroism which appeared in the news magazines.*



*Above: Propaganda Kompanie artist Walter Gotschke's water colour gives a graphic impression of troops moving up a busy road on their way to the eastern front.*





**B**enito Mussolini founded the Fascist Party in Italy in 1921. By October 1922 he was prime minister. The panoply of his regime harked back to the glory days of the Roman Empire, as did the name of his organisation: *fascies* were axes surrounded by bundles of rods, carried to symbolise the authority of Roman magistrates. Some foreign observers found the fascist regime hard to take seriously, but the bare-chested parading and tub-thumping rhetoric attracted Adolf Hitler. He became a devoted admirer of the Italian dictator who styled himself *Il Duce*. In conscious imitation, Hitler became *der Führer*.

## HITLER AND MUSSOLINI

By the late 1930s, roles were reversed. It was Mussolini's turn to play the admirer. He allied Italy with Germany, the 'Pact of Steel' welding his fate to Hitler's in the hope of sharing the loot if a second European war broke out. For all his bluster, Mussolini had actually played a cautious hand domestically and internationally. His foreign adventures were restricted to

# Balkan Invasion

**With the invasion of Russia about to start, the last thing Germany needed was a war in the Balkans. But Mussolini was in trouble, and needed Hitler's help.**

targets unable to resist and with no friends to intervene. Libya, Abyssinia (Ethiopia) and Albania were incorporated into his latter-

day Roman Empire, at the cost of censure from the League of Nations, but no tangible opposition. His support for the Nationalists during the Spanish Civil War (1936-9) might have tempered

his enthusiasm for war: neither his fascist volunteers nor the regular army divisions he dispatched there performed very well. When Hitler invaded Poland, triggering World War II, Italy stayed neutral.

Mussolini sat on the fence all winter. His forces did not stir even when Hitler attacked in the west. Only on 10 June, by which

**March 1941: German motorised troops cross the Danube into Bulgaria as the Wehrmacht prepares to invade the Balkans.**





# Map of the Balkans

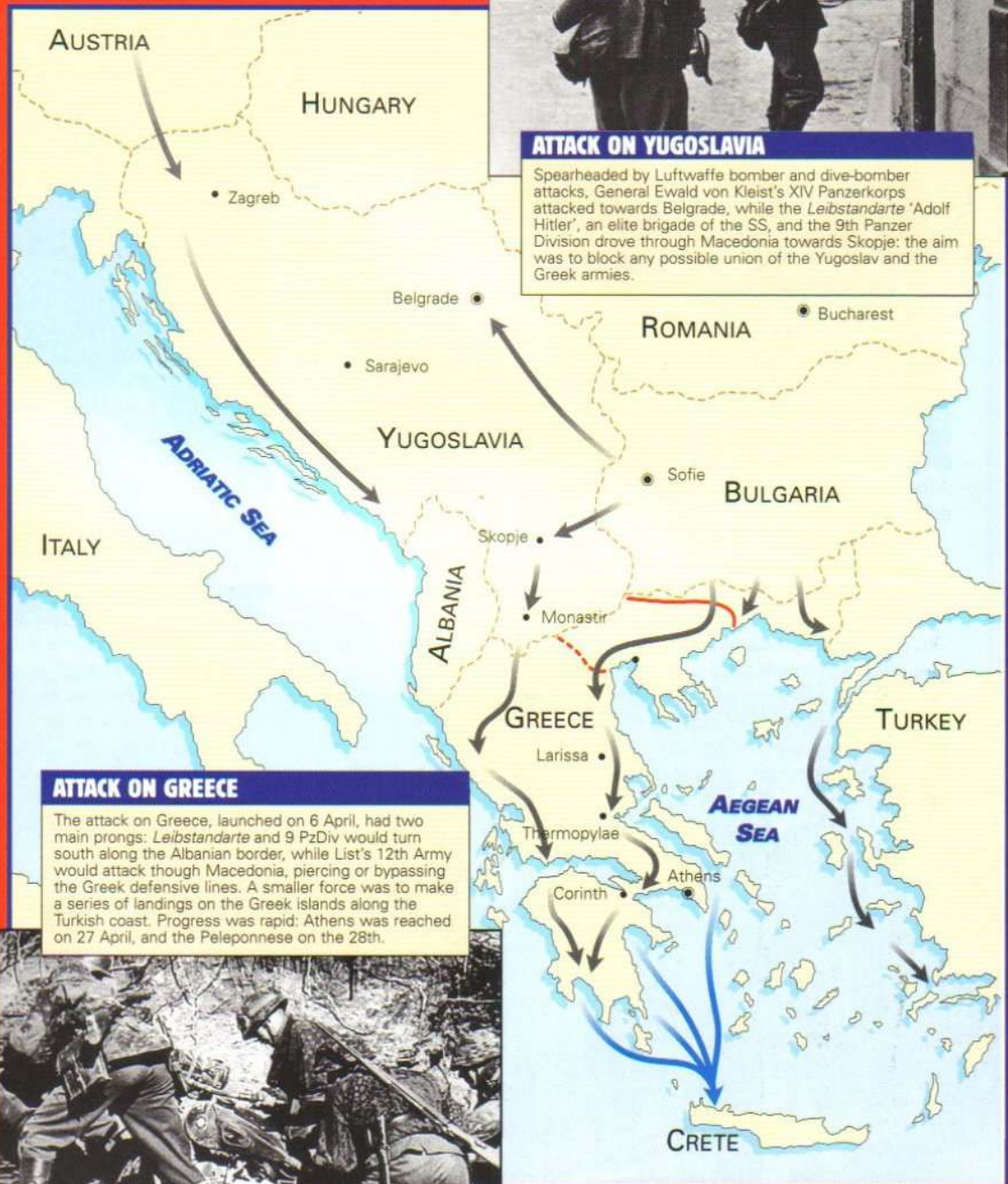
The Wehrmacht had been funneling troops into Hungary and Romania – allied to Germany by treaty – since the autumn of 1940. By February 1941 more than 650,000 were in place, primarily to secure the southern flank of the invasion of the USSR which was planned for May. When it became necessary to take action against the Greeks, who were putting up a stiff fight against the Italians, Hitler bullied the Bulgarians and Yugoslavs into signing the Tripartite Pact. This allowed General-feldmarschall List's 12th Army to cross their borders on its way to Greece.

time the British Expeditionary Force was being taken off the beach at Dunkirk, did Italy declare war. Italian forces attacked French positions in the Alps on 20 June, making no progress by the time of the armistice four days later. For this belated effort, Hitler awarded Italy a zone of occupation in Provence, and Mussolini looked forward to dominating the Mediterranean now that France and Britain were out of the picture.

## MUSSOLINI ATTACKS

Depicted by cartoonists as the opportunist jackal to the Nazi lion, Mussolini launched an invasion of his own, deliberately not informing Hitler until his armies were on the move. On 28 October 1940, Italy invaded Greece. War aims can only be surmised: the list of demands given to Athens amounted to military

subjugation as a response to 'provocation' on the Albanian border. Unfortunately for Mussolini, the Greek army was a very different prospect from the ill-equipped African tribesmen his armies had defeated earlier. Not only did the Italian invasion break down that winter, a





# HITLER'S BATTLES 6



*Above: A column of German infantry moves through the arid landscape of central Greece. The well-trained Wehrmacht troops were more than a match for the Greeks and their allies.*

counter-offensive in December drove the invaders back into Albania and back further 50 miles for good measure.

Hitler had already decided to intervene, issuing orders for an invasion of Greece on 4 November. Bulgaria was bullied into allowing German forces free passage and German forces began to assemble opposite the 'Metaxas Line' defences that separated these ancient enemies. German engineers bridged the

Danube on 28 February. However, an assault through Bulgaria would restrict the invasion to a relatively narrow front from which the Greeks were prepared to resist. More Nazi brow-beating secured permission from the Yugoslav government for German forces to cross their territory to attack Greece. On 25 March Yugoslavia signed an alliance with Germany and Italy.

## COUP IN BELGRADE

Hitler's plans were disrupted within 48 hours. Hard-line Serb officers organised a military coup in the name of the young King Peter, overthrowing his

uncle, the regent Prince Paul. British troops were already landing in Greece, although the unease of their commanders was not communicated to the soldiers, the large Commonwealth contingent or Britain's new allies.

Bolstered by two infantry divisions, one Australian and one New Zealand, plus an armoured brigade and RAF Hurricanes, the Greeks prepared to meet the new invasion.

The German onslaught began on 7 April. Yugoslavia's small air force was swept from the skies and the Luftwaffe spent 10 April carpet-bombing Belgrade, killing 17,000 people. The country splintered along its pre-1914 boundaries, just as it was to do 50 years later. Two Croatian divisions mutinied, a breakaway Croat republic welcoming the Germans into Zagreb while Belgrade burned. The government requested an armistice on 14 April. However, two discrete groups of Serbs

**"In spite of any protestations of loyalty, Yugoslavia must for the time being be considered an enemy. Therefore, the country must be crushed as soon as possible"**

**Adolf Hitler  
Führer Directive No.25  
27 March  
1941**

scattered into their barren mountains: Chetniks, loyal to the monarchy, and the Communist partisans dominated by Josip Broz, the guerrilla leader known as 'Tito'. The stage was set for an internecine war that continues to the present day.

## ADVANCE INTO GREECE

The Germans had already reached Salonika. The 12th army, commanded by Field Marshal List, advanced from Bulgaria with three corps. The 30th and 48th corps drove directly to the



*Left: Infantry in Misch, Serbia. The Germans had simply planned to cross Yugoslavia into Greece before a military coup forced them to take more active measures.*



# Bloody war in Yugoslavia

**Fierce resistance to the invaders, but even more hatred for each other**

The German occupation of Yugoslavia opened a vicious can of worms. Croats supported the Germans, the Croatian Ustase conducting a genocidal campaign against the Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia. Some Serbs, led by local quisling General Nedic, supported the Germans. Others – mostly pro-royalist fragments of the army and gendarmerie – took to the hills. Led by Draza Mihailovich, they adopted the old Serbian name of Chetnik, from *ceta*, or regiment. Initial Serbian resistance brought savage reprisals from the Germans: the going rate was 100 Serbs executed for each German killed. The Chetniks were deadly foes of the Partisans – communist rebels led by Tito. The Chetniks offered to come over to the German side to fight the communists – while continuing to fight the Croatian fascists who were being supplied by the Germans. The Partisans were by far the most effective opposition to the Germans, and by the end of the war they claimed almost 200,000 men and women under arms. They were supported by the Allies since by their actions they tied down no less than 35 German divisions.



Above: An SS soldier decapitates a Serbian civilian with a wood axe. The war in Yugoslavia was fought with unparalleled ferocity, but although German reprisals were severe, most of the 1.2 million Yugoslavs who died in the conflict were actually killed by other Yugoslavs.

Below: Internal rivalries were often more important than resisting the invaders. Serb fought Croat, Chetnik fought Partisan, and Muslims, Catholics and Orthodox killed each other with great gusto. These Serbian Chetnik fought both for and against the Germans.



Above: Although Josip Broz, known as Tito, was a Croat, he did more than any other Yugoslav to bring the war home to the Germans and their Croatian allies. Tito's partisan army won the support of the Western allies in preference to the unreliable Serbian Chetniks.





# HITLER'S BATTLES 6



Aegean, punching clean through the Greek defences. A British armoured brigade deployed in the north was ordered to fall back along the eastern coast. The German 40th Corps included 5th Panzer Division and the elite SS *Leibstandarte* Adolf Hitler (an overstrength motorised brigade at this stage in its history, rather than the Panzer division it was to become). This force overran southern Yugoslavia to cross the Yugoslav-Greek frontier at Monastir on 10 April.

The Italians launched a new offensive timed to coincide with Hitler's intervention. Their forces in Albania had been re-supplied and re-equipped, whereas the Greeks' logistic situation had never improved. Outgunned, outnumbered, and with the Germans pouring into northern Greece, the Greek 'army of Epirus' started to give way.

Hitler's Directive No.27 called for the encirclement of the Allied forces by a breakthrough in the direction of Larissa, the key road junction south of Mount Olympus. All north-south traffic east of the Pindus mountains

came through this junction. With 5th Panzer Division charging down the roads and two German mountain divisions outflanking the valley defences, the plan nearly succeeded in trapping the British. The British 1st Armoured Brigade fought a running retreat to the Vale of Tempe, where a New Zealand and an Australian division checked the German advance on 15 April.

## THERMOPYLAE

The British fell back to the ancient battlefield of Thermopylae on 18 April. That they avoided the fate of Leonidas and his Spartans was largely thanks to ULTRA. British intelligence provided General Wilson with a stream of deciphered German signals that helped keep the British withdrawal one step ahead of the German advance: no mean trick given the mobility and tactical initiative of German commanders.

German troops entered Athens on 27 April. Elements of 30th corps embarked in commandeered local vessels to



occupy the Ionian islands of Samothrace, Lesbos and Chios. (The Dodecanese islands, including modern holiday favourites like Rhodes and Cos, had been ceded to Italy by the Ottoman Empire in 1912; they were not re-united with Greece until after the war). In keeping with the strict timetable for Operation Barbarossa, the invasion of the Soviet Union, the bulk of the German invasion force began withdrawing in May, leaving Greece to be held by a mixture of German reserve units and Italians.

Fifty thousand British and Commonwealth soldiers lived to fight another day, plucked from fishing ports and open beaches

**Above: Greek prisoners under German guard. The small Greek army had little chance of defeating the modern, well-equipped, battle-tested Wehrmacht.**

by the Royal Navy. Many were dropped off on Crete, something of a holiday atmosphere prevailing on the scenic island, untouched by war. It was assumed that the next stop would be Egypt and a temporary break from the war. What they did not know was that General Kurt Student, itching to get his *Fallschirmjager* (parachute) division into action, was studying maps intensively, calculating how many Ju-52s he would need to invade. The last battle for Greek territory was about to begin.



**Left: British and Commonwealth troops await evacuation from one of the ports in the south of Greece. Over 50,000 troops were pulled out in two days. Many were to be captured later on Crete.**

**Above: A key element in the German success were the two divisions of mountain troops, who fought over the rugged terrain of central Greece to bypass successive Greek lines of defence.**

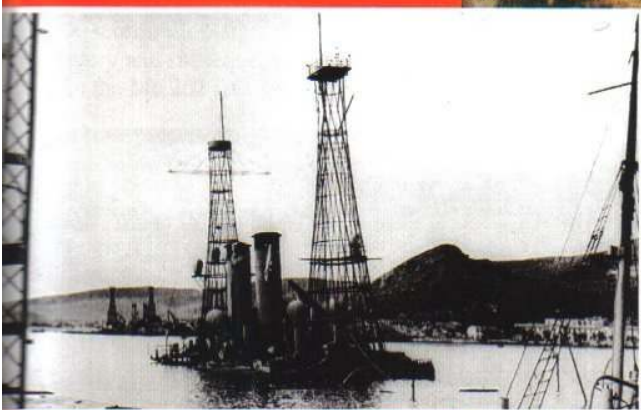


# The end for Greece

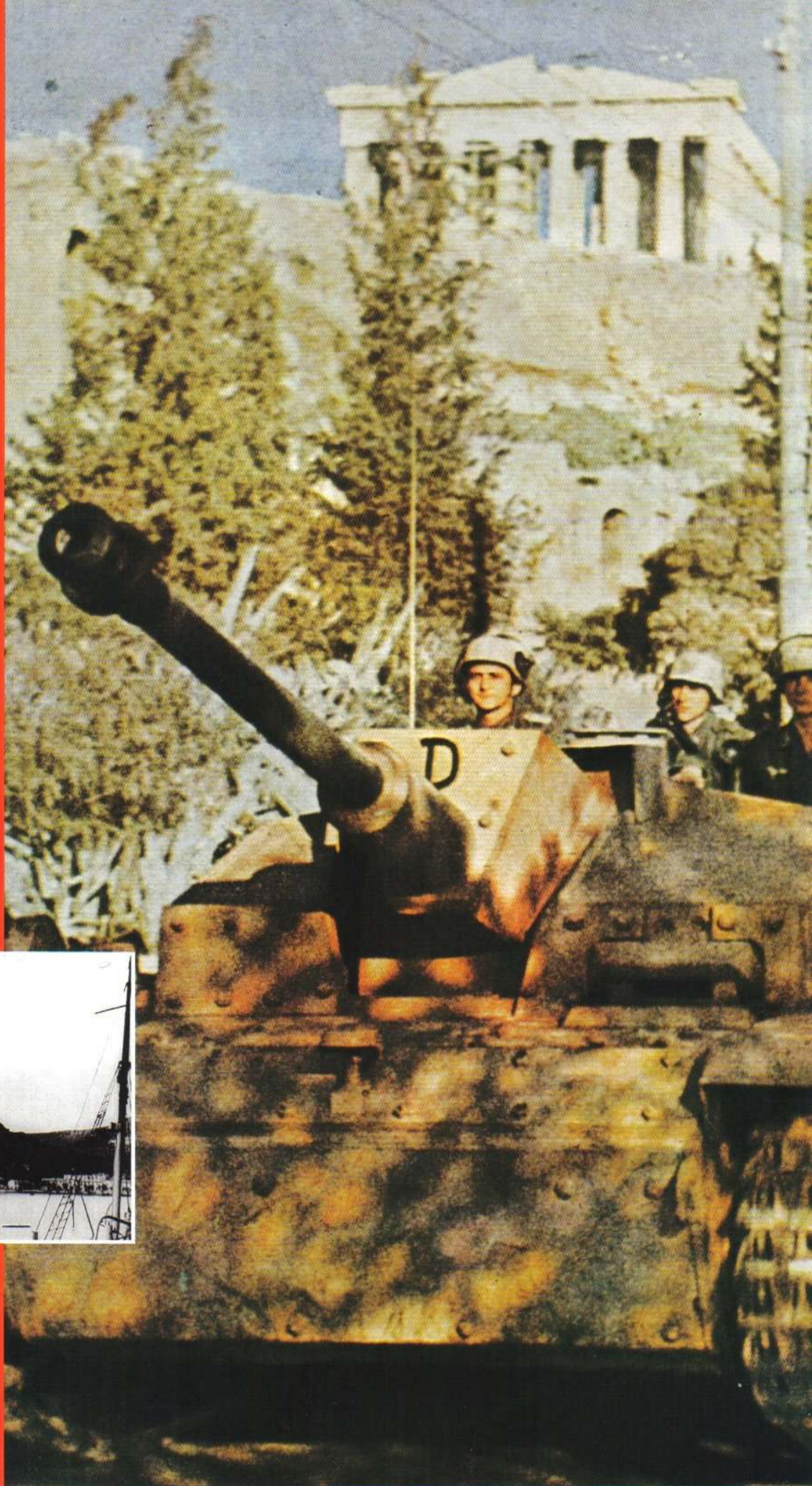
**T**he Greek government accepted defeat on 19 April, and the British announced their withdrawal from the mainland, although Crete would continue to be held. An orderly evacuation was imperilled on 26 April by a daring coup de main. German paratroops seized the bridge over the Corinth canal. However, the bridge was blown up and the retreat continued into the Peloponnese where a last stand at Kalamata ended with 7,000 British and Commonwealth troops laying down their arms after exhausting their ammunition.

Greek losses in the brief campaign were 15,700 dead and missing and 218,000 taken prisoner. British losses were 900 dead, 1,200 wounded, 1,612 missing and 9,000 prisoners of war. Italy lost 13,755 dead, 50,874 wounded and 26,065 missing. German losses were 1,518 dead and 3,360 wounded.

*Below: The majority of the tiny Greek navy was destroyed during April 1941. On 23 April, Stukas sank the ancient pre-dreadnought battleships Kilikis and Lemnos. Launched in 1905 as the USS Mississippi and Idaho, they had been bought from the United States before World War I.*



*Right: A Sturmgeschütz III self-propelled assault gun drives through the streets of Athens. The Greek capital fell to the Germans on 27 April, as the last of 50,000 British troops were being lifted off the Peloponnese.*







# MESSERSCHMITT Bf 109



*Small, agile and very fast, the Messerschmitt Bf 109 was probably the most capable of the first generation of low-wing monoplane fighters to enter service.*



HE Messerschmitt Bf 109 was the Luftwaffe's benchmark fighter throughout World War II. It was the mount of the vast

majority of the German aces and scored more kills than any other Axis aircraft. It was one of the

**The Bf 109, a classic combat aircraft, was Germany's most important World War II fighter.**

first monoplane fighters with fully enclosed cockpit and retractable landing gear, and when delivered to the Luftwaffe in 1936 it gave the re-arming German air force the most capable fighter in the world.

Few fighters of the period bettered the Bf 109's longevity, either. It entered service in time

to be blooded in Spain, and it remained the backbone of the Luftwaffe fighter arm until the end of the war. Even after 1945 it continued to serve with several air forces and briefly went back to war in Israeli hands.

The aircraft rapidly gained a great reputation, which was carefully nurtured by Nazi



*Designed at a time when most fighters carried a pair of rifle-calibre machine guns, early versions of the Bf 109 had four, which were soon supplemented by powerful 20-mm cannon.*

Germany's expert propagandists, and this lived on even after the aircraft had begun to show its age, and while newer fighters on both sides were clearly its betters.

The fighter which Germany's fighter aces took in to battle bears the name of its designer, Professor Willy Emil Messerschmitt. Messerschmitt was born in Frankfurt am Main on June 26, 1898. He established an aircraft construction plant at Bamberg in 1923, and in 1926 he produced his first all-metal aircraft. Hitler thought highly of Messerschmitt, as did Colonel General Ernst Udet, the Luftwaffe's Director of Armaments from 1939-41, who gave him preferential treatment over major contracts. But Messerschmitt was detested by Field Marshal Erhard Milch who directed Luftwaffe production and development from 1941.

Messerschmitt's aircraft were built at the Bavarian Aircraft Works - *Bayerische Flugzeugwerke AG* - which is why pre-war designs bore the prefix 'Bf'. However, Messerschmitt bought out the factory and subsequent designs like the Me 262 jet fighter bore

the prefix 'Me'.

On November 11 1937 the prototype Bf 109 V13 (D-IPKY), fitted with a specially boosted DB 601A engine delivering 1,650 hp for short periods, set a international speed record for land planes of 610.536 km/h

## COMBAT-TESTED

The Spanish Civil War gave the Luftwaffe a chance to evaluate the Bf 109 under combat conditions. Condor Legion pilots based at Tablada, Seville and flying in support of Franco tested three prototypes early in 1937. They were soon followed by early production fighters which had entered service with *Jagdgeschwader 2 'Richthofen'* in the spring of 1937. The Bf 109B-1 was powered by a 635 hp Junkers Jumo 210D engine which gave a top speed of 470 km/h at 4,000 metres and was armed with three 7.92 MG 17 machine guns. Combat experience led to the improved Bf 109D and the Bf 109E, nicknamed 'Emil' by its pilots, with which Germany entered World War II.

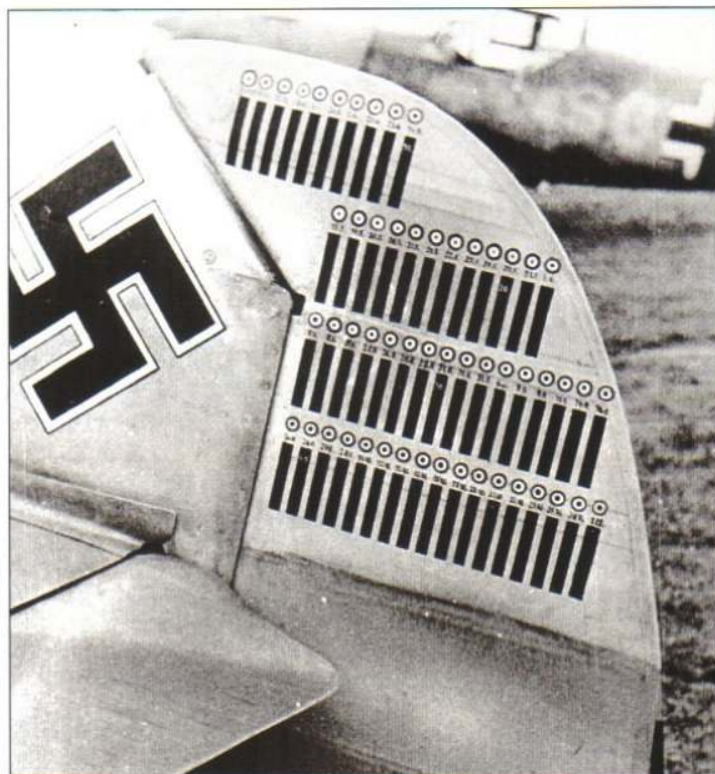
The 'Emil' was very heavily-armed by the standards of the day, with two wing mounted 20 mm MG FF cannon and a 20 mm MG FF/M cannon in the propeller hub. Two 7.9 mm MG 17 machine guns fired through blast troughs in the upper cowling. The Bf 109E had a maximum speed of 483 km/h at sea level and 560 km/h at 4,440 m. It was the aircraft with which the Luftwaffe dominated the skies over Poland, the Low Countries and France, though it came up against much tougher opposition during the Battle of Britain when 610 Bf 109s were lost in action. Tropicalised

*Right: The first production Messerschmitt Bf 109Bs entered service with the Luftwaffe in 1937. The new fighters were a huge challenge to pilots flying obsolete Heinkel He 51 biplanes.*

**"Ernst Udet, the World War I fighter ace who ran the Luftwaffe technical office was visiting the factory. To him, fighters were biplanes with open cockpits. He took one look at the 109 prototype and said, 'Gentlemen, that is not a fighter.' He was not a good prophet!"**



*Above: A pair of Bf 109Es from JG 27 patrol the North African desert. The mottled camouflage was designed to blend into the pattern of light and shadow cast on the rocky terrain by the desert sun.*



*Above: Kill-markings on the tailplane of Werner Mölders's Bf 109 at the end of the Battle of Britain testify to his success in combat. The Bf 109 was easily the most successful fighter of the early years of the war, and was flown by most of the Luftwaffe Experten, or aces.*







## Messerschmitt's rivals

### Old ideas versus state-of-the-art

The first prototype of the new Messerschmitt fighter, Bf 109V1 (Werk-Nr 758) registered D-IAB1, flew on May 28, 1935. It had been built to a 1934 specification for a single-seat all-metal monoplane fighter issued by the C-Amt (the technical department of the still-*clandestine* Luftwaffe). The prototype was powered by a British built 695-hp Rolls-Royce Kestrel V engine, pending the arrival of a new Daimler-Benz powerplant being designed for Germany's new generation of monoplane fighters.

Competitors included the Heinkel He 112, the Arado Ar 80, and the Focke-Wulf Fw 159

as well as the Bf 109. In a competitive fly-off organised by the Reichsluftfahrtministerium (RLM - the Reich Air Ministry) at Travemünde airfield in October 1935, only the Heinkel and Messerschmitt designs stood out, and the faster, lighter Bf 109 was judged the winner and was accepted into service as the Luftwaffe's main single-engined fighter.

*Below: The Focke-Wulf Fw 159 was like an enlarged version of the Fw 156 Stosser, the Luftwaffe's first fighter, but the high-wing or parasol configuration proved to be much less agile than a biplane and much slower than low-wing monoplanes like the Heinkel and the Messerschmitt.*



*Above: In an attempt to save weight, Arado designed its Ar 80 with fixed landing gear. However, it was too heavy, lacked agility and with the same engine was at least 80 km/h slower than the Bf 109.*



*Above: Although less sophisticated aerodynamically, the Heinkel He 112 had better ground handling than the Bf 109. Performance was broadly comparable though it was a little slower. But it was more complex and expensive to produce.*



## Messerschmitt Bf 109E-4

### I Gruppe, Jagdgeschwader 3, France 1940

**Wing:** The Bf 109's thin wing gave it much better high-speed performance than its German rivals. However, it left little room for bigger weapons, which came to be a problem late in the war.

**Engine:** Most Messerschmitt Bf 109s were powered by variants of the Daimler-Benz DB 601 or its succeeding DB 605 inverted-vee piston engine. Unlike the engines of British fighters which had gravity-fed carburetors, these had direct fuel injection, and so did not cut out in a dive.

**Machine guns:** Two MG 17 machine guns firing through the propeller disc were housed in the cockpit cowl above the engine. These were connected via an interruptor gear to the propeller shaft, ensuring that they only fired when the propeller blades were clear.

**Wing slots:** Fitted in the outer part of the leading edge, these popped out automatically at low speeds to give the Bf 109 more lift and more manoeuvrability.

#### SPECIFICATIONS

##### Messerschmitt Bf 109E-4

**Dimensions:** length 8.64 m (28 ft 4.25 in); height 2.497 m (8 ft 2.33 in); wingspan 9.87 m (32 ft 4.5 in); wing area 16.4 sq.m (176.53 sq.ft)

**Weights (typical):** 1900 kg (4,190 lb) empty; 2665 kg (5,875 lb) fully loaded.

**Powerplant:** one Daimler-Benz DB 601Aa liquid-cooled inverted vee engine rated at 1,175 hp on take off and 1,020 hp at 4500 m (14,765 ft)

**Performance:** maximum speed 471 km/h (293 mph) at sea level and 560 km/h (348 mph) at 4400 m; range 660 km (410 miles); initial climb rate 1000 m/min (3,280 ft/min); time to 6000 m (19,685 ft) 7.1 min; service ceiling 10500 m (34,450 ft).

**Armament:** two 20-mm MG FF 20-mm cannon each with 60 rounds in wings; two 7.9-mm MG 17 machine guns over fuselage; some E-4s modified to carry four SC 50 (110 lb) bombs or one SC 250 (550 lb) bombs on an underfuselage rack.

**Propeller:** The three-bladed controllable-pitch propeller which was fitted to DB-601-engined Bf 109s was far more effective than the simple two-bladed props fitted to early Spitfires and Hurricanes.



versions of the Emil also accompanied Rommel's Afrika Korps to North Africa, and the type was still in service during the opening phases of the war against the Soviet Union.

## CARRIER VERSION

One interesting variant was the Bf 109T-0, a modified version of the 109E-3. The 'T' stood for *Träger* or Carrier and the fighter was intended to equip the aircraft carrier *Graf Zeppelin*. Germany's pre-war naval plans called for four carriers, but the *Graf Zeppelin*, which was launched in December 1938, was the only one which came anywhere near completion. These aircraft were modified by Fieseler-Werke and had an increased wing area, spoilers on the wing upper surfaces, manually-folded outer wing panels, catapult spools and an arrestor hook. The delays in the completion of the carrier resulted in the cancellation of the Bf 109T-0s which were reconverted to E-3 configuration.

The Bf 109F was sometimes

known as 'Friedrich'. It entered service in the spring of 1941 and re-established the aircraft's combat viability, which had suffered with the British introduction of the improved Supermarine Spitfire V. It was flying this superior aircraft that the Luftwaffe aces made the majority of their kills against the slower aircraft of the Red Air Force. Its performance was impressive. Capable of climbing to 5,000 m in 5 minutes and 12 seconds it had a maximum speed of 600 km/h at 6,000 m.

Interestingly, the 109F had lighter armament than the Emil, with one 15 mm MG 151 cannon in the propeller hub and two 7.9 mm MG 17 machine guns in the upper cowlings.

## TWIN FUSELAGE

One of the most unusual experiments with the Bf 109F airframe was the Bf 109Z, in which two 109 fuselages were married by means of a common centre section and tailplane. It was originally proposed that this



**Above:** Luftwaffe pilots were the best trained in the world in 1939. Having a superior aircraft allied to combat-tested tactics meant that the Bf 109 was the dominant fighter in the first year of combat.

**Below:** A tropicalised Bf 109E-7 flown by Oberleutnant Ludwig Franzisket escorts a Ju 87 Stuka returning from a mission over Libya in April 1941. Franzisket was the adjutant of I/JG 27.



**Cockpit:** Allied pilots who flew the Bf 109 were uncomfortable with the poor visibility from the forward cockpit, but Luftwaffe pilots did not seem to mind.

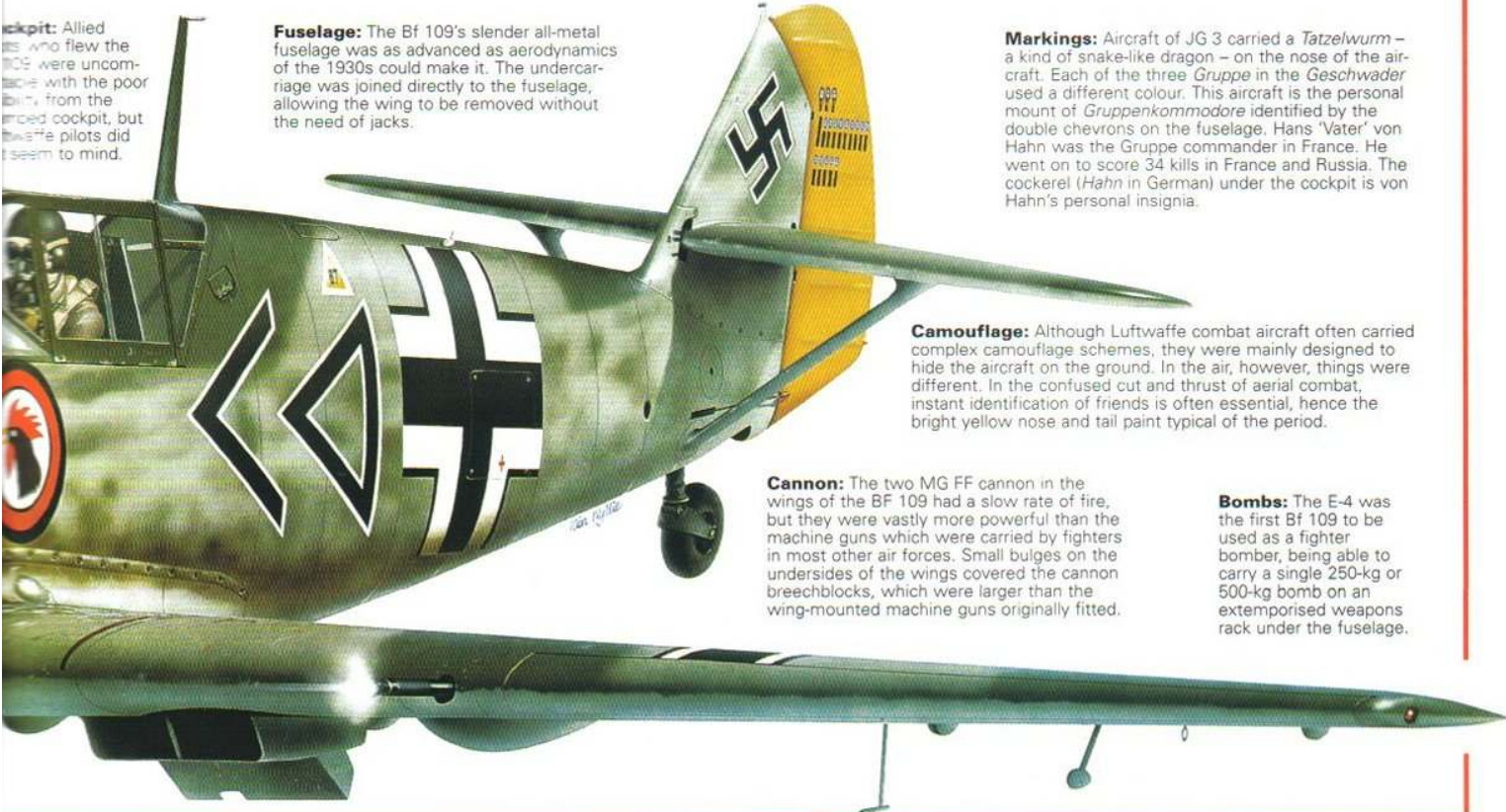
**Fuselage:** The Bf 109's slender all-metal fuselage was as advanced as aerodynamics of the 1930s could make it. The undercarriage was joined directly to the fuselage, allowing the wing to be removed without the need of jacks.

**Markings:** Aircraft of JG 3 carried a *Tatzelwurm* – a kind of snake-like dragon – on the nose of the aircraft. Each of the three *Gruppe* in the *Geschwader* used a different colour. This aircraft is the personal mount of *Gruppenkommandore* identified by the double chevrons on the fuselage. Hans 'Vater' von Hahn was the *Gruppe* commander in France. He went on to score 34 kills in France and Russia. The cockerel (*Hahn* in German) under the cockpit is von Hahn's personal insignia.

**Camouflage:** Although Luftwaffe combat aircraft often carried complex camouflage schemes, they were mainly designed to hide the aircraft on the ground. In the air, however, things were different. In the confused cut and thrust of aerial combat, instant identification of friends is often essential, hence the bright yellow nose and tail paint typical of the period.

**Cannon:** The two MG FF cannon in the wings of the Bf 109 had a slow rate of fire, but they were vastly more powerful than the machine guns which were carried by fighters in most other air forces. Small bulges on the undersides of the wings covered the cannon breechblocks, which were larger than the wing-mounted machine guns originally fitted.

**Bombs:** The E-4 was the first Bf 109 to be used as a fighter bomber, being able to carry a single 250-kg or 500-kg bomb on an extemporised weapons rack under the fuselage.







Above: The Bf 109G introduced a new powerplant. The DB 605 was about the same size as the DB 601, but it delivered more power, and hence greater speed. However, its greater weight upset the balance of the fighter and made it harder to handle.



Above: Introduced in 1941 to combat improved marks of Spitfire, the Bf 109F had an uprated powerplant and was much more aerodynamic than the trusty 'Emil'.

machine should act a prototype for a heavy fighter bomber utilising a similar configuration of Bf 109G components. The pilot was in the port fuselage and the aircraft was armed with five 30 mm MK 108 cannon. The airframe was built but never tested.

## 'GUSTAV' ARRIVES

The Bf 109G, universally known as the 'Gustav', made its operational debut with Channel based Jagdgeschwader in May 1942 and bore the brunt of later fighting in Russia, the Mediterranean, France and in the defence of the Reich. New and improved models of allied fighters were again outclassing the 109, and with the 'G' series Messerschmitt sacrificed agility for sheer performance. The Bf 109G-2 which was powered by one 1,475 hp Daimler-Benz DB 605A twelve cylinder inverted-Vee liquid cooled engine had a maximum speed of 510 km/h at sea level and of 653 km/h at 9,000 m. Its maximum range was

850 km. The aircraft had a wing span of 9.92 m, length of 8.85 m and height of 2.50 m and a wing area of 16.1 sq m. Its empty weight was 2,253 kg and maximum weight 3,200 kg. Like the 109F, the G-2 was armed with one 20 mm MG 151/20 cannon firing through the propeller hub and two 7.9 mm MG 17 machine guns in the upper cowlings.

The G-5 introduced faster-firing and more powerful MG 131s over the engine. The blisters necessitated by the larger breeches of these weapons led to the G-5 and subsequent variants of the Gustav being given the alternative nickname of 'die Beule' or 'The Bulge'.

The G-6 became the 'standard' model of Gustav, though standard was a somewhat loose term when so many aircraft

Bf 109G-2s of JG 54 'Grunherz' on the northern sector of the Eastern Front. At this time, the summer of 1942, the 109 was still better than most Soviet fighters, but improved designs from Lavochkin and Yak were about to challenge the Germans.





# 109 Variants

## BUILT IN HUGE NUMBERS OVER A LONG CAREER

Depending upon which records you look at, it has been estimated that between 31,000 and 33,000 Messerschmitt Bf 109s were built between 1937 and 1944. The story of the 109 parallels that of the Luftwaffe itself: after dramatic success in the early years of the war it began to show weaknesses when fighting at a disadvantage over England in 1940.

Further triumphs against a weak and unprepared enemy in the USSR in 1941 hid the fact that the basic design, while capable of considerable upgrades, was being matched and passed by fighters designed

in Britain, the USSR and the USA. Even so, it was being built in ever increasing numbers as the Allied bomber offensive took the war to the heartland of the Reich.

Although in most respects outperformed by the Focke-Wulf Fw 190, the 109 had the edge in the high-altitude war forced on the Luftwaffe by high-flying USAAF bombers.

During the war the Bf 109's performance jumped from a maximum speed of 550 km/h (340 mph) in the Bf 109E-1 of 1939 to more than 724 km/h (450 mph) in the Bf 109K-4 of 1945. Climb-rate and service ceiling also improved dramatically.

But the end of the war was not the end of the line for the 109. Czechoslovakia had been home to some of the 109's assembly parts, and after the war the Letov concern continued to build the type. They used Jumo engines, and their handling can best be assessed by the nickname their pilots gave to the fighter – Mezak, or 'Mule'.

The last operational 109s were flown in Spain, where the type had made its combat debut in 1938. The last Merlin-engined versions, built by Hispano, remained on the Spanish air force inventory until the mid-1960s.

### Messerschmitt Bf 109E-7

7. Staffel JG 27  
Sicily, February 1941

The first German fighters to support Rommel's Afrika Korps were Bf 109Es. The E-7 model had provision for a single 250-kg bomb or a 66 gallon drop tank to give the short-legged fighter more range. This example was flown by Joachim Müncheberg, one of the leading Mediterranean aces, who ended the war with a score of 135 kills.



### Messerschmitt Bf 109F-4/Z Trop

3. Staffel JG 27  
North Africa, 1942

Many pilots thought the 'F' model was a retrograde step from the 'Emil', thanks to its single cannon firing through the propeller hub. However, in the hands of an expert pilot its increased performance made it lethal. This example was flown by Hans Joachim Marseille, the top scoring ace in the west with 158 kills, mostly against the RAF.



### Messerschmitt Bf 109G-6/R6

11. Staffel JG 26  
Greece, September 1943

Over 12,000 examples of the G-6 variant of the Bf 109 were built, more than any other model. It was designed to accept a wide variety of conversion sets to equip it for a variety of missions. This example has a pair of underwing MG 151 cannon added. It was flown by Oberfeldwebel Heinrich Bartels, who was shot down and killed in December 1944 after scoring 99 victories.



### Hispano HA-1112-M1L

7 Fighter-bomber Sq.  
Spanish Air Force  
1959-1965

Based on the Bf 109G airframe, but fitted with a Rolls-Royce Merlin engine. Known as 'Buchón' (pigeon) thanks to its deep-breasted profile, the HA-1112-M1L was used as a ground attack aircraft, armed with a pair of long-barrelled Hispano 20-mm cannon and underwing racks for air-to-ground rockets.







*Left: A Luftwaffe Experte adds another victory to the tail of his Bf 109. The term Experte was used to indicate a pilot who had scored more than 10 kills.*

*Above: A late-model Bf 109G taxis out for a mission in the autumn of 1944. It is fitted with a 'Galland Hood', the redesigned canopy intended to improve pilot vision.*

were modified with *Rustsätze* - field conversion kits for additional or alternative underwing armament or ventral stores. The G-6 had one 20 mm MG 151/20 cannon with 150 round firing through the propeller hub and two 7.9 mm MG 17 machine guns in the upper cowlings with 300 rounds per gun, plus two 20 mm MG 151 cannon mounted underwing with 120 rounds per gun.

## LONG-RANGE WEAPONS

As the defensive fire power of USAAF bombers increased, the Luftwaffe looked at ways of lengthening the effective engagement range. To achieve this the Bf 109G-6/R2 carried two Army *rockets* used in the 21 cm *Nebelwerfer* 42, a towed five-barrel multiple rocket launcher. The 109 pilots would approach the formations of USAAF bombers from the rear and engage from 850 metres. Since the rocket warheads contained more than 10 kg of TNT their impact on a bomber was devastating. The drawback was that the underwing launching tubes, nicknamed *Ofenrohr* or 'stove pipes' by the pilots, were incredibly draggy. This slowed them down and made them vulnerable to escorting

Thunderbolts and Mustangs.

As the German army was forced onto the defensive, fighter pilots were increasingly required to fly ground attack missions. The 109 had been used as a fighter bomber as far back as the Battle of Britain - the Bf 109E-1/B was equipped with a Revi gunsight as a bombsight, and was fitted with racks for four 55 kg bombs or one 250 kg bomb.

However, the Bf 109G-14 was optimised for this role. It was armed with one 20 mm MG 151 and two 13 mm MG 131s. Two additional MG 151s could be fitted under the outer wing panels and a 250 kg bomb carried under the fuselage. Some aircraft were fitted with the 'Galland hood' an improved cockpit canopy which gave the pilot better visibility to the sides and rear. A developed



*Left: From the G-6 onwards, Bf 109s began to sport bulges on the fuselage and wing. These covered the breeches of larger and more powerful guns.*

**"Our Messerschmitts were terrible. Designed to land on grass we were using them off concrete, and tyres were always blowing. The radios didn't work - you couldn't contact your wingman!"**

**Rudy Auergarten  
Avia 199 pilot  
Israel, 1948**



# Advances from Messerschmitt

## Experimental 109s

The Luftwaffe was continually looking at possible replacements for the 109. Messerschmitt made three serious attempts to produce new designs, the projects running alongside the continuing development and evolution of the basic 109 airframe.

In 1937 the company designed a special aircraft to make an attempt on the world air speed record. Originally called the Me 209, the German propaganda machine publicised it as the Me 109R, even though it had nothing in common with the original fighter. The design was militarised in 1939 and 1940 and again renamed the 209, but it turned out slower than the Bf 109F which was about to enter service!

First flying in 1942, the Me 309 was considered the natural successor to the 109. However, although faster than the older fighter it was less agile, and considered too difficult to fly. The Me 209 II might have been more practical, but by the time the prototype was completed in 1944, resources were being stretched to the limit to meet demand for the Bf 109G, and it never entered production.



Above: Powered by a 2,000 hp DB 627 engine and with extended wings for high-altitude operations, the Me 209H should have been capable of a speed of 740 km/h (460 mph).



Left: Messerschmitt engineers work on the Me 309 prototype. The wide-track tricycle undercarriage made the aircraft tricky to handle on the ground, with a tendency to swerve unexpectedly on the runway.

Above: After the introduction of the Bf 109G, surplus Bf 109Fs were used to research new features. This heavily retouched photograph shows the 23rd prototype after installation of an Me 309-style undercarriage.

version, the G-16, was heavily armoured, but never made it to operational squadrons.

The Bf 109K was the final production model. Similar to late model Gustavs, it had a more powerful engine and incorporated minor structural differences to save strategic resources. It was armed with one 30 mm cannon firing through the propeller hub and two 15 mm MG 151 cannon in the upper cowling. Powered by a Daimler-Benz DB 605 ASCM/DCM twelve-cylinder

inverted-Vee liquid cooled engine it had a maximum sea level speed of 608 km/h, while at 6,000 m with methanol/water boost it could deliver 727 km/h. It could climb to 10,000 m in 6 minutes and 42 seconds. The Bf 109K went into action in Operation *Bodenplatte*, the series of Luftwaffe attacks launched against RAF and USAAF bases in Belgium and Holland on New Year's Day 1945.

For its achievements up to 1940 alone, the Bf 109 deserves

to go down in history as one of the world's great fighter aircraft, and if the same level of superiority over all opposition eluded the Bf 109 from the Battle of Britain onwards, this should not tarnish the fighter's reputation. In a constantly changing air war, the Bf 109 proved adaptable enough to accept new powerplants and weapons with a minimum of modification, allowing the family of variants and sub-variants to grow rapidly, with scarcely a

break in production. This versatility was the key to the aircraft's colossal success, and was due to straightforward, sensible design practice.

Variants of this classic warbird accounted for more than 60 per cent of all single-seat fighter production in Germany between 1936 and the end of the war in 1945. By that time as many as 33,000 aircraft had been built – more than any other fighter in history except for the contemporary Soviet Yaks.

*The last 109-derived airframes to see combat were the Czech-built Avia S 199s used by 101 Squadron of Israel's Chel Ha'vir. Disliked by its Israeli pilots as much as it had been by the Czechs, the S 199 suffered from an alarming accident rate.*







# THE FÜHRER'S BODYGUARD



Easily the most visible of all of the many branches of the Nazi party, the SS grew from being a small, black clad elite guard in the 1930s to an army of immense fighting power at the end of the War.



*Above: Members of SS Panzer Division Das Reich rest after the battle to retake Kharkov in March 1943. By this time, most of their equipment is similar to that worn by the Wehrmacht, though they retain their Waffen SS insignia and headgear.*

*Left: Standard bearers of the Leibstandarte on parade. They are wearing the field grey uniform issued to armed SS units in 1938.*



**T**HE HISTORY of the SS falls into distinct phases. Formed as a security force to keep order at party meetings, then becoming the Führer's bodyguard, the SS was not a large organization in the 1920s. By the time Hitler came to power, however, it had grown to around 25,000 men, though this was drop in the ocean compared to the millions of SA members.

## BLACKSHIRTS

After 1933, the SS grew rapidly, in the process splitting into three main groups. The *Allgemeine SS* or 'general' SS initially took control of the police and security forces. It was also responsible for administering the rapidly-growing SS economic empire, and took a leading role in investigating and promoting Himmler's racial theories. The *Allgemeine SS* retained the characteristic black uniform long after other SS branches had switched to grey.

Separate from the *Allgemeine SS*, the *Totenkopfverbände* were the camp guards, and have been most responsible for horrible reputation the SS has kept since the end of the war.

## SS SOLDIERS

The *Waffen SS* or armed SS was established to provide well-trained troops of unquestioned loyalty to the Party and the Führer. Originally looked on with distrust by the army, as it grew it was absorbed into the regular armed services. In the early days at least its members retained the fanaticism which had been bred into them, which they translated into fighting spirit. However, all-too often that fanaticism translated into war crimes, since fanatics are more prone to brutality than ordinary soldiers.

But as the war went on, it became harder to distinguish the SS from the soldiers alongside whom they served.



Above: Hitler's bodyguard, the *Leibstandarte*, was first authorised to wear a white summer uniform in June 1939. It was meant to be used between the beginning of April and the end of September, but other than on ceremonial duty at Berchtesgaden it was seldom seen. The tie clip was for civilian wear.



Left: A pair of shoulder straps worn by a *Waffen-SS* infantry *Hauptsturmführer* (equivalent to a captain in the British or US armies). The 'Das Reich' cuff title was worn by the second SS division, formed from the *SS-VT* (*Verfügungstruppe*) which had fought in France. Renamed 'Reich' in the Balkans, it became 'Das Reich' in Russia in May 1942.





# THE BLACK CORPS

From the first, the SS had differentiated itself from the SA by wearing black caps and adopting its own insignia. However, when Himmler was appointed its commander on 6 January 1929, those changes became more profound. Above all, it was the adoption of the all-black uniform with silver trim which made the SS stand out even more from the

brown-shirted masses of the SA. To this ready visibility was added fiercely high selection standards and strict training emphasising loyalty to the Führer. It was with this body of men that Hitler seized police power when the Reichstag was burned down, and it was the SS which decapitated the rival SA in the infamous 'Night of the Long Knives'.



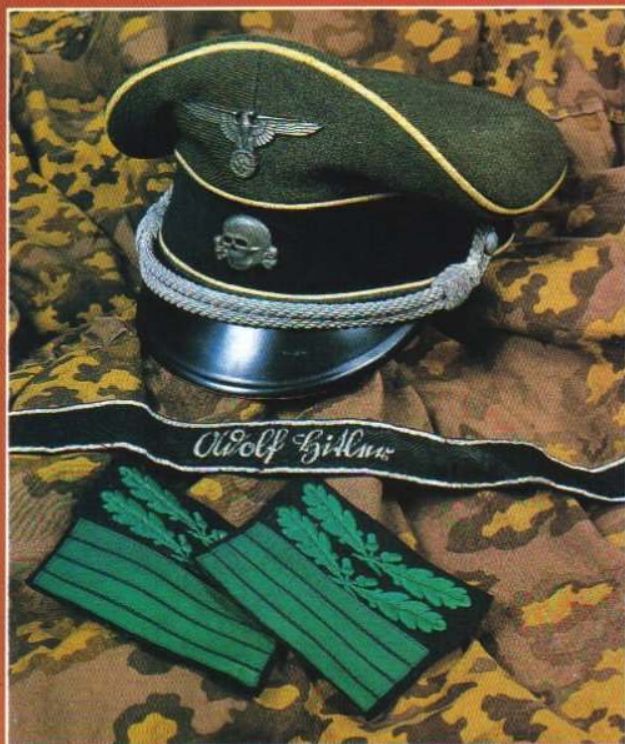
Above: Most sections of the NSDAP had their own newspaper. Some, like the SA's *Der SA-Mann*, had huge circulations. The SS newspaper was *Das Schwarze Korps*, edited by Guenther D'Alquen. While much of its content highlighted the purity of blood required in the SS world view, it also ran a series of articles in the 1930s calling for Jews to be resettled in Israel.

Below left: Scharführer's tunic of the Leibstandarte, Hitler's SS bodyguard. On the breast is an SA gold sports badge; in the 1930s, only the fittest served in the SS and the best went into the Leibstandarte.

Below: Black greatcoat worn by a Scharführer (sergeant) serving with the 3rd Standarte or regiment of the armed SS, *Der Führer*. This was one of three regiments which during World War II would form the core of the SS division *Das Reich*.







Above: The SS were among the first military units to adopt camouflage uniforms. Badges of rank were redesigned and toned down to match. These arm badges were worn by an Oberführer in the Leibstandarte, equivalent to a senior colonel or brigadier in other armies.



Above: The Soldbuch or paybook was meant to be carried at all times. It was the SS man's identity card, his service record, and gave details of his current rank, posting and unit.

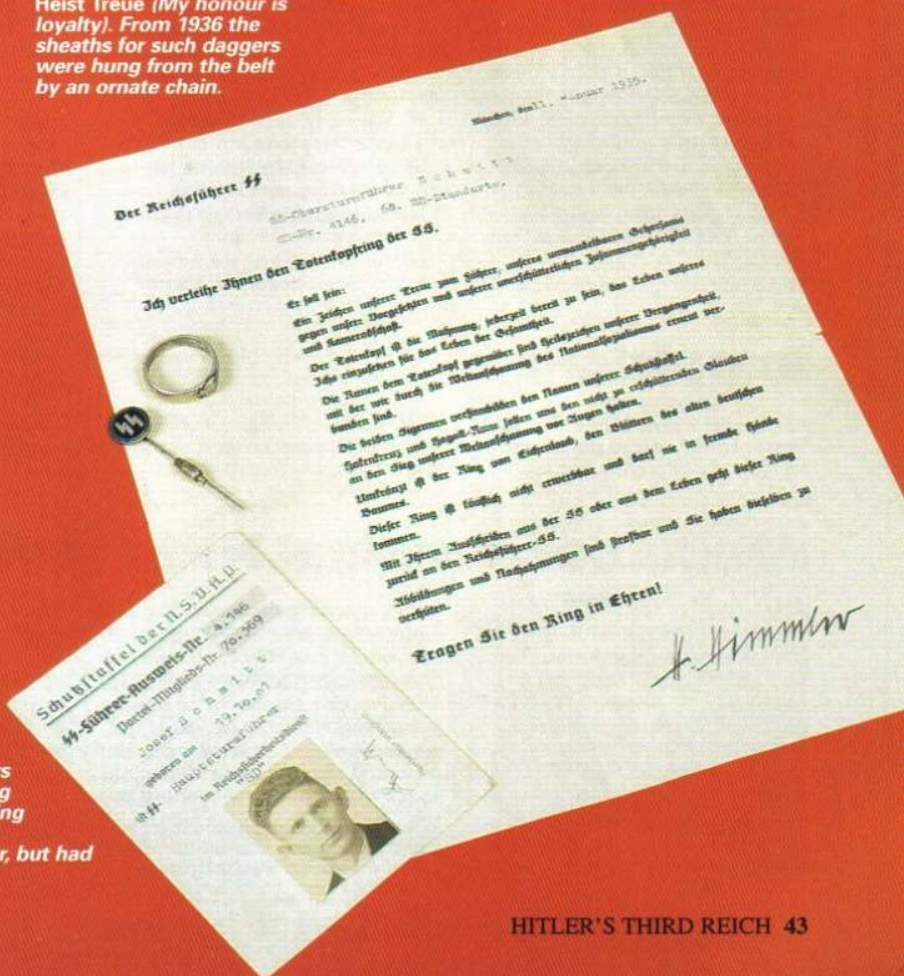
Right: SS Deaths Head rings were awarded to senior officers as a sign of their good standing within the SS. On death, the ring bearer's family could keep the personal citation from Himmler, but had to return the ring to the SS.



Above: A standard pattern of SS swords was introduced in 1936. Officers did not automatically receive the right to wear one: Himmler would only permit them to be worn by senior members of the Allgemeine SS and graduates of the SS leadership schools.



Right: An early 1933-pattern SS dagger bearing the SS motto *Meine Ehre heißt Treue* (My honour is loyalty). From 1936 the sheaths for such daggers were hung from the belt by an ornate chain.





# A-Z OF THE THIRD REICH

## Erbhofgesetz

In the Nazi creed, small farmers were the absolute foundation of the German Volk. To enhance the already strong support for National Socialism amongst Germany's fairly backward agricultural community, on 29 September, 1933, the Nazis promulgated the *Erbhofgesetz* or Hereditary Farm Law.

Around 600,000 medium-sized farms were classified as *Erbhöfe* – hereditarily entailed lands which could not be mortgaged or sold or divided and could only be passed on to the eldest son of the family. The plan was to create a "new nobility of blood and soil" in the Nazi image, supplanting the large landowners and peasant smallholders which had been the norm before.



Above: The farmers covered by the *Erbhofgesetz* benefited from the Nazi interests. In 1933 the average size of such farms was 30 acres; by 1939 this had almost doubled to 55 acres.

## Esser, Hermann (1900 - 1981)

One of the founders of the German Workers' Party – he was member number 2 – and an early follower of Hitler. A born rabble-rouser and speechmaker, he was described as a prototypical Nazi, being "a crude and rowdy thug, rivaling Streicher's reputation for lechery and Jew-baiting. His fluent, lurid writing was a hallmark of the early *Völkischer Beobachter*". A selfish opportunist with no ideological

convictions, his reputation suffered when he 'went sick' on the morning of the Munich putsch, and when it failed he fled to Austria.

In the early days of the Party he twice threatened to defect to the Communists when he felt he was not being appreciated. Elected to the Reichstag in 1933, he became the Bavarian economics minister for a brief period. Esser deserves a small

footnote in history as the man who first publicly called Adolf Hitler *der Führer* – the Leader.

Right: The moustachioed Hermann Esser confers with Nazi interior minister Wilhelm Frick. Esser's political career was short: a self-opinionated and prickly character, he argued with too many senior Nazis ever to progress very far.



## Expulsions

At the end of World War II, the Soviet Union seized the eastern territories of Poland, and the

Poles in turn took parts of Germany. Some sixteen million Germans were expelled from

Danzig and East Prussia and over two million are believed to have died from cold, hunger and

disease as they moved westwards on their forced migration.

## Faulhaber, Cardinal Michael von (1869-1952)

Archbishop of Munich and Cardinal of the Roman Catholic Church in Germany during the Third Reich. Faulhaber was a right-wing theologian who had taught at Strasbourg University at the beginning of the century, an anti-republican who had asserted that World War I was a just war. In the early days of National Socialism he adopted a broadly supportive attitude to the

Nazis, since they were anti-Communist. He even ordered prayers for the life of the Führer.

As he became aware of the true character of the Third Reich his attitude became more ambivalent and he knew beforehand of the July 1944 plot to kill Hitler. After questioning by the Gestapo he denounced the assassination attempt and affirmed his loyalty to Hitler.

Right: The Catholic Church in Germany was ambivalent in its reaction to the Nazis. There was nothing ambivalent about the reverse attitudes, however. Hitler and Heydrich intended to 'wipe out the Black Crows' once the Jews had been dealt with.

See also A-Z of the Third Reich  
Issue 4: Concordat





## Feder, Gottfried (1883-1941)

National Socialist party ideologist and early economics adviser to Hitler. He had a dream of a populist, rural, racially pure party. He did not mind capitalism: what he hated was "interest slavery", which he attributed to the Jews.

On October 14, 1930 he introduced a bill to the Reichstag that would freeze interest rates at

4 per cent and expropriate the property of Jewish bankers and members of the stock exchange.

When he came to power, Hitler sidelined him into a minor post in the Ministry of Economics. However hostility from Reichsbank head Hjalmar Schacht meant that he was dismissed from the ministry in 1934.

*Right: Gottfried Feder addresses a Party meeting at Brunswick in 1933. Feder's attacks on big business and large land owners risked alienating the source of financial support that the Nazis enjoyed.*



## Fegelein, Hermann (1906-1945)

Hermann Fegelein began his career in Middle Franconia as a groom and then became a jockey. A chance contact with a horse fancier who was a Nazi led him into the Party.

Fegelein's knowledge of horses led the Waffen SS to select him as the commanding officer of the SS-Kavalleri Division 'Florian Geyer', a position he held from May 1940 to May 1942. He was wounded in September 1943

south of Charkov and posted to the Führer's HQ as Himmler's official SS liaison officer.

He married Margarete Braun, Eva's sister, on June 3, 1944. Fegelein was in the Führerbunker in Berlin in the last days of the Reich. As Berlin fell to the Russians, he tried to escape with a mistress who may have been an Allied spy. Captured by the Gestapo, Hitler had him shot for desertion on April 29, 1945.

*Right: Although Fegelein undoubtedly displayed great bravery as a soldier, he was by nature a gambler with an eye for the main chance. He took one risk too many when he tried to desert his Führer.*

**See also Hitler's War Machine**  
**Issue 11: Waffen SS**  
**See also Nazi Symbols**  
**Issue 6: The Führer's Bodyguard**



## Feindhörer

Literally 'Those who listen to the Enemy'. Listening to broadcasts by the BBC was deemed to be the act of a *Volksschädling*, or

enemy of the state. As the news worsened half-way through the war, the propaganda content of German radio broadcasts

increased dramatically. As a result, the German service of the BBC was seen as the only reliable source of news. To minimise the

risk of being overheard, listeners would turn the volume down to a whisper and listen with their ears pressed close to the radio.

## Felix, Operation

The code name for the planned German operation to capture Britain's key naval base at

Gibraltar. It needed the co-operation or even the full participation of Franco's Spain,

but the wily Spanish general managed to withstand Hitler's pressure and stayed out of the

war, although Spanish volunteers fought with the Germans on the Eastern Front.

## Fifth Column

A widely held belief that Nazi sympathisers operating behind the lines assisted the rapid advance of German forces in the opening years of the war. The

term is derived from the Spanish Civil War. In a radio address early in October 1936, Nationalist General Emilio Mola said that there were four columns

advancing on Madrid, but a fifth column of Franco sympathisers was already inside the city.

Historical analysis has shown that Fifth Columnists assisting

the Nazis either did not exist or had little operational impact. However, the threat of such a group or groups was a potent psychological weapon.

## Flick, Friedrich (1883 - 1972)

Immensely wealthy industrialist and early supporter of the Nazis. Flick controlled United Steel, Daimler-Benz and Dynamite Nobel. In 1932 he gave 50,000 Reichsmarks to the Nazi political organisation. A year later this had risen to 120,000 Reichsmarks. He joined the NSDAP in 1937, being given party number 5,918,393.

Flick contributed 100,000 Reichsmarks to the SS through

the *Freundeskreis Heinrich Himmler* (see below). During the war his companies used 48,000 slave workers of whom 80 per cent died.

Sentenced to seven years at Nuremberg, he served three. After the war the *Flickgruppe* was broken up by the Allies but with the reconstruction of the Federal Republic it was allowed to reform. Flick died a billionaire.

*Right: Friedrich Flick, seen here at Nuremberg, denied responsibility for the deaths of slaves in his factories. He resisted attempts by survivors to gain compensation. This was in spite of the fact that the death rate was higher than in many concentration camps.*

**See also Inside the Third Reich**  
**Issue 12: Hitler's Bankers**





## Flossenburg

Established in Bavaria in 1938 to house criminals, Flossenburg received 1,000 political prisoners

from Dachau in 1939. During the war, up to 15,000 mainly foreign detainees were held here – the

first prisoners used in medical experiments were selected in the autumn of 1940. By the end of

the war the camp controlled up to 100 sub-camps at industrial plants in the region.

## Focke-Wulf

Focke-Wulf Flugzeugbau AG was the important aircraft design and construction company founded in 1924 by Heinrich Focke and George Wulf. Wulf died in 1927 while testing a prototype and Focke left the company ten years later to concentrate on the production of helicopters.

During the war Focke-Wulf was headed by the gifted aircraft designer Dipl.Ing. Kurt Tank. Its most important product was the Fw 190 fighter and fighter-bomber, which entered service in 1941, and by the end of the war was the Luftwaffe's most numerous tactical aircraft. Other products included the Fw 200 Kondor (Condor) long range maritime strike aircraft and the

Fw 189 reconnaissance aircraft. First flying in July 1937, the Kondor was designed as an airliner. Its long range made it suitable for Atlantic operations, and in spite of a limited bomb load it achieved considerable success against British convoys in the early years of the war.

**Right: Focke-Wulf Condors based on the French coast were such a threat to British convoys that Churchill called the plane the "Scourge of the Atlantic"**

**Right inset: A Focke-Wulf Fw 190 fighter-bomber at a base on the Eastern Front stands ready to be flown on a mission.**



## Four Year Plan

Hitler's plan for national self sufficiency in areas like engineering and the chemical industry devised in the summer of 1936. Speaking of the project Hitler said, "The success of this plan is merely a question of our energy and determination. National Socialists have never recognised the word 'impossible'". The project was entrusted to Hermann Goering, then at the height of his power and influence. Goering came into conflict with Dr. Hjalmar Schacht, the president of the Reichsbank,

who was sacked in 1939. Goering continued the Four Year Plan concept into the war years, employing forced labour because, he argued, the German people were fighting for their existence.

**Right: Hitler describes his economic plans to the Reichstag. Hermann Goering, sitting behind his Führer, used his control of the Four Year Plan to build up an immense personal industrial empire with factories and plants all over Europe.**



## Frank, Hans (1900 – 1946)

Hitler's lawyer and later Governor-General of Poland. A *Freikorps* activist and an early member of the NSDAP, he represented Hitler in some 150 lawsuits. He was tasked with researching Hitler's ancestry to prove that he had no Jewish blood and ran the internal party disciplinary court.

Appointed to head the NSDAP legal office in 1929, he became Bavarian minister of justice when the Nazis came to power, and in 1934 was appointed Reich Minister without portfolio.

Frank was appointed Governor General of Poland in 1939. He

was a ruthless master, expropriating property, using Poles for slave labour, and sending more than 85 per cent of the Jewish population their deaths in extermination camps.

In 1942, he fell out of favour when he called for a return to constitutional rule after a friend was executed. Stripped of all NSDAP and legal roles, he remained in place in Poland. At Nuremberg he announced his conversion to Catholicism and abjectly confessed his guilt. He was found guilty of war crimes and crimes against humanity and hanged on October 16, 1946.

**Right: Hans Frank was one of the most brutal and corrupt of all of Hitler's minions, looting Poland of its treasures and sending hundreds of thousands of its citizens to their deaths. Having embraced the Catholic Church at Nuremberg after the War, he was one of the few senior Nazis to admit to being guilty of war crimes.**



**See also The Holocaust**

**Issue 3: Einsatzgruppen**

**See also Hitler's Battles**

**Issue 1: Blitzkrieg Poland**



## Frauenschaften

In spite of the fact that females made up nearly 40 per cent of the German labour force in 1933, the Nazis were firm believers in the 'Three Ks' – *Kinder, Kirche, Küche*, or children, church and

the kitchen. The place of women in Nazi Germany was definitely in the home, where they were meant to bear and rear the future leaders and workers of the National Socialist state.

Founded in October 1931, *Frauenschaften* or 'Women's Organisations' were tasked with the co-ordination of all women's movements into a National Socialist *Frauenfront*, or Nazi

Women's Front. Humanitarian societies and organisations which were democratic in nature were accused of Marxism, enmity to the family, advocacy of abortion and lack of patriotism.

## Freikorps

Private armies of ex-soldiers formed in the chaotic years after the end of World War I. Usually raised by their former regular officers and given tacit support by right-wing authorities, they used their battle-proven tactics to defeat Communist attempts to foment revolution in Germany. The Communists in Bavaria and the Spartacists in Berlin were crushed by the *Freikorps*, and workers in the Ruhr who attempted to organise on socialist lines were also repressed.

The tiny *Reichswehr* allowed to Germany by the treaty of Versailles also made use of the *Freikorps* as auxiliary troops. Captain von Schleicher, a staff

officer in the political department of the German Army HQ, secretly paid and equipped *Freikorps* units fighting on the eastern borders against the Poles and Lithuanians. Von Schleicher would later become a General and Chancellor of Germany.

In 1921 the *Freikorps* were officially disbanded. Many *Freikorps* members drifted south to Munich, where they formed much of the initial strength of the Nazi *Sturmabteilung* or SA.

**Right: Members of a Bavarian Freikorps pose for a photo in 1921 as all such associations were being disbanded. Many of these men would join the Nazis.**



## Freisler, Roland (1893 – 1945)

Hitler's favourite judge. A prisoner of the Russians during World War I, Freisler returned to Germany in 1919 and completed his law studies at Jena. He joined the NSDAP in 1925, and in 1933 became a party delegate in the Reichstag. He became a minister in the Prussian Justice Ministry, and was appointed state secretary in the Reich Ministry of Justice the following year.

In 1942, Freisler attended the

Wannsee Conference, which set up the Final Solution. Later that year he became head of the *Volksgerichtshof* or People's Court, enforcing racist legislation and condemning thousands of Germans for treason, defeatism, and opposition to the Führer.

His victims included the youthful 'White Rose' anti-Nazi protesters Hans and Sophie Scholl. Freisler gained awesome notoriety as the judge at the trial

of the leaders of the July Plot where his abusive rantings were recorded on film. He died in Berlin on 3 February 1945, killed in a USAAF air raid while presiding over a treason trial.

**Right: Roland Freisler's performances in court were less about establishing truth and justice than they were about exacting vengeance and retribution.**



## Freundeskreis Heinrich Himmler

The *Freundeskreis* or 'Circle of Friends of Heinrich Himmler' was a group of wealthy industrialists, insurance magnates and bankers who met under the patronage of Heinrich Himmler every second Monday in Berlin.

It was a powerful, if unofficial link between the political masters of Germany and the economic powerhouses of the country. They financed the Nazi party in its early years, crucially during the 1932 and 1933 election campaigns which saw Adolf Hitler emerge as Chancellor and Führer.

Ten years later they provided much of the finance for the

expansion of the Waffen SS in 1942 and 1943. Himmler conducted members of the circle on a guided tour of Dachau in 1937, and in 1942 they were briefed on the activities of the SD, including the actions of the *Einsatzgruppen* death squads on the Eastern Front. They benefited from access through the SS to scarce resources and slave labour during the war.

**Right: Members of the Freundeskreis like these senior Flick Group directors (on trial at Nuremberg) profited from the intimate contact with the higher echelons of the Party.**





## Frick, Wilhelm (1877 – 1946)

Lawyer and one of Hitler's closest comrades. A senior Munich police officer who joined the Nazis before the Beer Hall Putsch in 1923. Frick was the first Nazi to be appointed to a ministerial post, in Thuringia in 1930, and when the Nazis came to power he was given the key post of Reich Minister of the Interior. In September 15, 1935 he drew up the Nuremberg Laws on

citizenship which forced Jews to register and which forbade them to marry Germans.

He handed over the interior ministry to Himmler in 1943, when he was chosen to succeed the assassinated Heydrich as Protector of Bohemia and Moravia. At Nuremberg he was charged with drafting, signing and administering laws designed to eliminate Jews from German

life and national economy. He was found guilty of crimes against peace, war crimes and crimes against humanity. He was hanged on 16 October, 1946.

*Right: Wilhelm Frick was Hitler's inside man in the Munich police in the early days of the NSDAP. He was one of the key figures in the rebuilding of the Party after the Beer Hall Putsch.*



## Fritsch, Werner Freiherr von (1880 – 1939)

Commander in Chief of the German Army from 1934 until 1938. A bachelor, von Fritsch was a member of an old military family, who had risen through the senior ranks of the Reichswehr. A man of conservative political temperament, von Fritsch was shocked by and openly critical of the lawlessness of Hitler's colleagues and the Nazi suppression of civil liberties.

The Nazis saw him as a

potential threat and in 1938 used the Gestapo to frame von Fritsch with a homosexual called Bavarian Joe. Although innocent, von Fritsch was tried by a secret military court and resigned. He was replaced by General Walther von Brauchitsch. With the declaration of war in 1939 he returned as honorary colonel to his cavalry regiment and was killed in action near Warsaw.

*Right: A general of the old Prussian school, Werner von Fritsch was an obstacle to Hitler in the Nazi quest to control the army. Brought down by a false accusation of homosexuality created by the Gestapo, von Fritsch deliberately sought out the heaviest fighting in the Polish campaign – in a quest for a soldier's death.*



See also Secret Hitler Files

Issue 11: Hitler and the Generals

## Fritzsche, Hans (1900 – 1953)

Radio propaganda chief in the Ministry for Public Enlightenment and Propaganda. He served as a private soldier in World War I. After completing a doctorate in the early 1920s he entered journalism.

In 1933 he was recruited by Goebbels to head the Propaganda ministry's press news service. As a political

commentator he became a major broadcaster with an audience of over 16 million. His broadcasts began with the words "Hier spricht Hans Fritzsche!" ("Hans Fritzsche Speaks!").

Fritzsche continued to broadcast until the last days of the war. Although charged with the major war criminals at Nuremberg, he was never more

than a functionary and he was found not guilty. The following year a German denazification court found him guilty of encouraging anti-Semitism and urging the German people to fight on after the war was lost.

*Right: Hans Fritzsche's elegant phrasing and clear speaking voice brought him fame on the German radio.*



## Fronterlebnis

In the chaotic conditions which beset Germany after World War I, many veterans looked back on their time in the trenches with nostalgia. What they missed in civilian life was the comradeship

and deep sense of belonging that they had experienced in uniform.

*Fronterlebnis* or 'Front Experience' was a style of writing about World War I that stressed camaraderie verging on the

homosexual, alternating with brutal depictions of battle.

Much favoured by the Nazis, its leading exponents were Heinz Steguweit, Edwin Eric Dwinger and Werner Beumelburg. The

plots of many of the stories describe how a group of self-centred, individual soldiers coalesce into "an oath-bound band of brothers."

## Fuhrer Headquarters

In the days when Germany was waging aggressive war, Hitler had headquarters constructed near the main fronts to demonstrate his involvement in the soldiers' life. There were six major HQs. *Felsennest* (Cliff Nest) was at Bad Munstereifel about 30 miles from the Belgian border (1940). *Adlershorst* (Eagle Eyrie) at Ziegenberg near the Ardennes (1940) was abandoned by Hitler

because it was "too luxurious", though he returned briefly during the Ardennes offensive of 1944-45. *Wolfsschlucht* (Wolf's Gorge) at Bruly-le-Pêche, France (6-25 June, 1940) was also abandoned – this time because of the insect life. *Tannenberg* (1940) was set up near Freudenstadt in the Black Forest. The most famous of Hitler's headquarters was *Wolfsschanze* (Wolf's Lair) at

Rastenburg in East Prussia (1941-44) which controlled the war on the Eastern Front and was where the Führer survived the July 1944 Bomb Plot. *Werwoy* (Werewolf) was a forward HQ at Vinnitsa, Ukraine (July 1942)

*Right: Hitler confers with General Jodl, his main military advisor, at the Wolfsschanze hidden deep in the East Prussian forests.*





# COMING IN THE NEXT VOLUMES OF **HITLER'S** Third Reich

## SECRET HITLER FILES

Hitler and women:  
Unusual relationships



## THE HOLOCAUST

Into the  
Ghetto



## HITLER'S HENCHMEN

Martin Bormann  
Rudolf Hess

## HITLER'S BATTLES 7

Assault on Crete

## INSIDE THE REICH

Hitler Youth:  
Creating a Nazi Future



## HITLER'S WAR MACHINE

Railway guns  
Infantry weapons  
Battleships

## NAZI HORRORS

The Concentration Camp  
system: from penal facilities to  
slave-labour and murder

## NAZI SYMBOLS

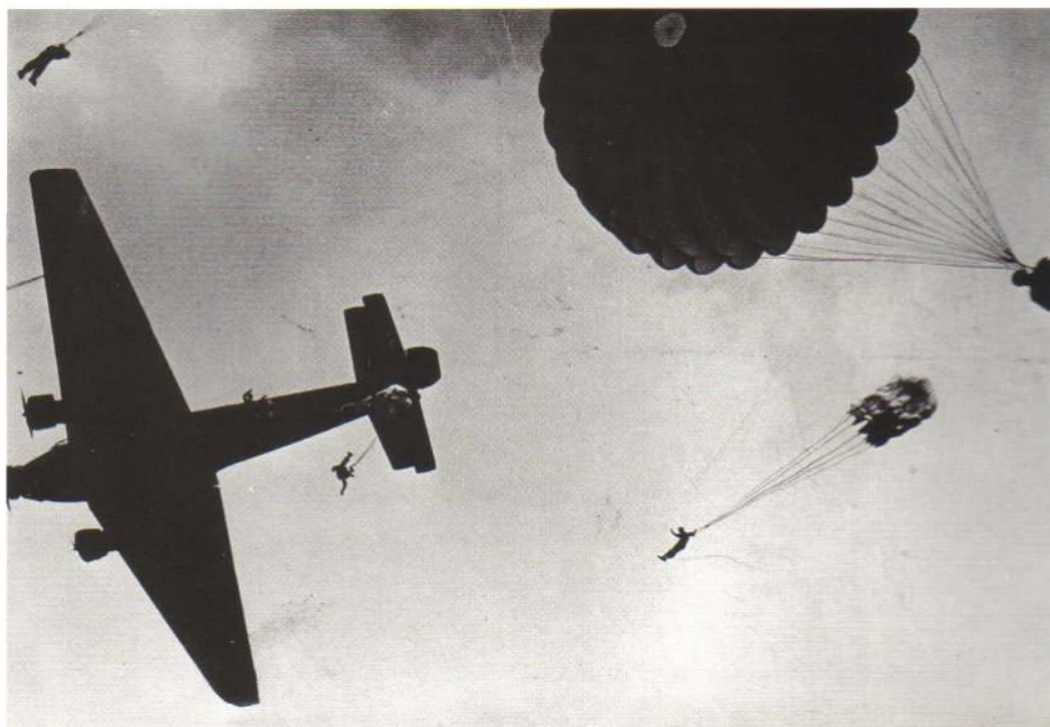
Uniforms and Badges  
of the Panzer troops

## INSIDE THE THIRD REICH

German opposition to Hitler



## A-TO-Z OF THE THIRD REICH





# IN THIS VOLUME OF **HITLER'S** **Third Reich**

## **SECRET HITLER FILES**

Hitler was a true warlord, absolutely dominating his generals. But was he any good as a military leader?

## **HOLOCAUST**

Belsen was not the biggest concentration camp, but the horrors discovered when it was liberated were among the worst of all.



## **HITLER'S BATTLES**

Hitler did not want to invade the Balkans, but he had to send his army into Yugoslavia and Greece to save Mussolini from trouble.



## **INSIDE THE THIRD REICH: HITLER'S HENCHMEN**

Albert Speer, Hitler's architect, became the second most important man in the Reich when he took over as minister for armaments and war production.

## **INSIDE THE THIRD REICH**

The Nazi Party controlled every aspect of German art – right down to the work painters did in their private studios!



## **NAZI SYMBOLS**

Uniforms and insignia of the SS



## **HITLER'S WAR MACHINE**

The Messerschmitt Bf 109